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VIZETELLY'S ONE VOLUME NOVELS.

XXX.

BABOE DALIMA;

OR,

THE OPIUM FIEND.

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE DUTCH BY THE

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BABOE DALIMA;

OR, THE OPIUM FIEND.

CHAPTER I.

AT MOEARA TJATJING.

IT was a terrible night in February 188—.

A violent storm from the north-west was raging along the northern coast of Java. The wind howled and roared as though a legion of fiends were holding Sabbath in the black mass of clouds which were driving along.

The waves of the Java sea were running mountain high, and came curling into the beach in monstrous billows topped with mighty crests of dazzling foam. These crests were brightly phosphorescent, and each breaker, as it came rolling in, for an instant shed a pale fantastic shower of sparks upon the black seething waters, leaving, the next instant, the blackness darker than before. The sea-coast on which our story opens formed here, as in so many other places in Java, an extensive marsh, the slimy clay of which the influence of the tropical sun had clothed with a most curious kind of vegetation.

Had it been day the eye, as far as it could reach, would have rested upon thousands upon thousands of tree-tops, closely packed together, and rising about thirty feet from the soil. The stems of these trees did not reach the ground, but rested on knotty roots, which, like arches, grew out of the earth. These roots were divided, branching out in all directions, so that the trees might be likened to many-footed creatures, the supports or legs of each of which crossed and recrossed with those of its neighbour. Thus looking along the ground might be seen a kind of tangled network under a thick canopy of green, and that network again was entwined with gigantic creepers, hanging in festoons from the singular archways and climbing upwards into the tops of the trees.

By daylight, between those myriads of twisted roots forming, as it were, a gigantic labyrinth, there might have been seen a swarming mass of living things, unsightly and loathsome, which would have filled the beholder with wonder and disgust.

There, among thousands of other living beings, lay the sluggish alligator glaring at its prey with fixed and stony eye. There countless tortoises and "Mimis" were crawling and darting about in quest of food. There swarmed monstrous crabs and shrimps of all kinds, varying in size from that of the largest lobster to the almost microscopical sea-spider. All these in millions were wriggling in the filthy ooze which was formed of the detritus of this singular mangrove forest. In the mud which clung about the roots, these hideous creatures lived and teemed, not perhaps in a state of perfect concord, yet maintaining an armed kind of peace which did not prevent them from becoming allies whenever some unhappy victim, whose luckless star had cast upon that shore, had to be overpowered.

Close by the narrow strip of land, where, not only in storms but in all weathers, land and water seemed to strive for the mastery, there stood a small hut hidden away completely among a clump of "Saoe" trees. These trees grew there, the only ones of their kind amidst the gloomy forest of mangrove.

Surrounded by the dense foliage as by an impenetrable wall, the hut was completely invisible from the land. On the other side it commanded a wide view of the sea; but even there it was screened from observation by its position among the leaves.

We called it a hut,—it was, indeed, little more than a large sentry box, and it, most appropriately, bore the name of "djaga monjet" or monkey-perch. It was put together in a very primitive fashion, and was covered with "Kadjang" mats, and "attaps," both of these rough building materials obtained from the Nipah palm.

The "djaga monjet" was built in the morass on piles which raised it some considerable distance from the ground. Thus the waves which now and then threatened to swallow up the fore-shore altogether, could freely wash about under it, and break and divide against the firmly driven stakes. The trunk of a tree, with some rough steps clumsily cut into it, served as a ladder and gave access to the hut which, at the time this tale begins, was wrapped in the deepest darkness, but which yet was not tenantless.

Two voices might have been heard issuing from the doorway. The speakers fancied they were talking in a confidential whisper; but the blustering of the storm had gradually led them on to raise their voices, so that now they were yelling at each other rather than conversing.

That, however, was of very little consequence. At such an hour, and in such fearful weather, no human being would have dreamed of prowling about there. The most zealous coast-guard's man would have declined that duty.

The men in the hut were talking in Malay, but they might, without difficulty, have been recognised for Chinamen. Their guttural pronunciation, the difficulty with which they sounded the letter "r," which with them indeed was spoken as "l," and a certain lisping, weakly, altogether most unpleasant accent, put the matter beyond doubt.

Yes, they were two Chinamen who, sitting in that little watch-house, were eagerly, in the pitch dark night, scanning the angry sea before them.

"No," said one of them, after a considerable interval of silence—"No, there is nothing whatever to be seen. In such weather, it would be simply tempting fate. You may be quite sure that the Kiem Ping Hin is snugly lying at anchor at Poeloe Karabab. She would never think of starting in such a storm."

"You may be right," replied the other, "but the master's orders were most positive. We are posted here on purpose to help the men of the Kiem Ping Hin to get their cargo safe ashore."

"That is true enough, Than Khan, and we shall get our pay, I daresay; but, for all that, you cannot deny that she cannot possibly come in to-night. Just hark how the wind howls, hear how the breakers roar—our perch is shaking like a reed. How would you like to be out on such a night as this?"

"I," cried Than Khan, "not for all the money in the world. But still we know the old Arab Awal Boep Said—he is a tough old sea-dog, and no weather will—"

"Look out!" cried the other; "there, just there! You see that big curling wave yonder! Look, you can just see it by the light of the foam. Yes, by Kong! A 'djoekoeng!'"

"You are right, Liem King," replied Than Khan, "it is a 'djoekoeng'" (a boat made of a hollowed tree-stem). "There were two persons in her, both Javanese—I fancied a man and a woman."

"Yes," said Liem King; "the man was rowing hard, the woman seemed frightened, she had her hands up to her face."

"The 'djoekoeng,'" shouted Than Khan, "was heading for the shore; but she can never get through the breakers."

"I am not so sure of that," replied Liem King. "She was making straight for Moeara Tjatjing, if she can only keep that course, she may pull through."

"Why," said Than Khan, "in such a sea as this, no boat can live, she must be swamped. A rare feast for the boajas, eh?"

"That 'djoekoeng,'" said Liem King, "will get through safe enough. I made her out to be a surf boat, and you know it takes a good deal to upset them."

"No doubt," said Than Khan, "for all that, I am glad enough I am not in her."

"Look out," shouted the other. "Look, there she is again. yes, she is making for the Moeara. If she can get behind the 'bow-nets' she is safe enough."

"If she can get under the lee of the bow-nets, perhaps, but, but—"

"Anóther boat," exclaimed Liem King. "There are white men in her."

The words were no sooner uttered than two, three, four sharp reports were heard. They were rifle-shots fired from the boat, upon the occupants of the "djoekoeng." With what result who could tell? For a single instant only, the faint gleam of some gigantic breaker had revealed the two boats to the pair of spies. The next moment all was deep darkness again, and, gaze as intently as they would, not even their sharp eyes could discover anything further.

Thus a quarter of an hour passed away, when suddenly Than Khan exclaimed, "A steamer!"

Sure enough, far out at sea, shone the well-known green and red lights, and, high above them, the white light at the mast-head.

"The guard-ship!" cried Liem King.

"No doubt of it," said the other, "it must be the Matamata. Well, all I can say is that if the Kiem Ping Hin has left her anchorage she is not showing any lights; she has got away safe enough by this time."

"Come, I think we may be off home to the Kampong; no smugglers will come ashore to-night, you may be sure."

For a while longer did the two Celestials keep watching the steamer's movements. First she showed her three lights plainly enough, she was therefore making straight for the land. After a time, however, all of a sudden, her green light disappeared, leaving for a while the red light only visible. Presently that also went out and only the white top-mast light remained visible, and, as it seemed stationary, our Chinamen concluded that the steamer had anchored or was perhaps moving with her head to the wind.

Said Than Khan at length, "It is no use staying here; while that cursed Matamata is about they will not be able to get anything ashore. Come, let us be going."

"All right," replied Liem King; "but I vote we first go and have a look at the Tjatjing, we may just possibly get to know something about the 'djoekoeng.'"

So our two worthies clambered down the rough log which, as we have shown, stood as a ladder against the hut; the wind howling, meanwhile, as furiously as ever.

In a few steps they came upon a kind of pathway for which they had to grope with their feet in the deep darkness. They found it; and as every now and then a wave would come washing over it, the two Chinamen had to splash on in the brine. That, however, did not greatly interfere with their progress. They knew the road well, and even had the weather been rougher, they would have got along without much hesitation. They had, in fact, not very far to go. In a few minutes they reached the small river Tjatjing which close by emptied itself into the Java Sea.

At the spot where the Chinamen came upon the stream it made a kind of bend or elbow as if, just before losing itself in the ocean, it had thought better of it and was trying to retrace its course. At that bend the mangrove roots retired a little from the shore, leaving a pretty wide open space from which the prospect over the river would have been quite clear; but the darkness was so intense that even Than Khan's ferret eyes could make out nothing.

"If the 'djoekoeng' has reached the Moeara at all," roared Than Khan in the ear of his companion, "she must have come ashore here. They cannot possibly have got her further up the Tjatjing, there is not water enough and the marsh-weed completely chokes it up."

"Hush," said Liem King; "I hear something."

He was right. In spite of the awful noise of the tempest a low moaning sound could just be heard.

Both pricked their ears, took their bearings; and softly, with stealthy tread they sneaked forward in the direction of the sound. Presently, they almost stumbled over a boat which lay on the beach with its stern half under water.

"The 'djoekoeng,'" muttered Than Khan.

Directed by the moaning sound they groped along the boat which was but a hollowed tree. Its bamboo sail-wings were lying close by smashed all to pieces by the wind and water; and a few steps further on they discovered two human beings lying prostrate in the rank grass.

"Who is there?" called Liem King as he cautiously drew nearer.

"It is I," replied a very feeble voice in answer to the challenge.

"I? who is I?" asked the Chinaman.

"I, Ardjan," was the answer.

"What?" cried Liem King, "Ardjan of the Kiem Ping Hin."

A faint cry at these words issued from the lips of one of the castaways.

"Silence," whispered the other Chinaman.

Both then bent forward over the figure which had given the name of Ardjan; but in that thick darkness it was impossible to distinguish anything.

One of them pulled a dark lantern out of his pocket, struck a match and, with some trouble, managed to procure a light. As soon as he had recognised the features he cried out:

"By ——! it is Ardjan! What in the world are you doing here?"

"I have fallen overboard," was the reply.

"Indeed you have? with that 'djoekoeng?'" sneered Liem King.

"I found her in the water as I was swimming about," was the reply.

"And that woman?" continued Liem King; "how about her? Did you pick her up also floating about? Who is she?"

"She is Moenah, my sister," faintly said Ardjan.

"Ah! your sister," exclaimed Than Khan with a low, dirty laugh. "I daresay she also managed to tumble overboard?"

With these words he threw the light of the lantern full on the face of the so-called sister. The uncertain gleam revealed the well-shaped form of a beautiful Javanese maiden of sixteen who, in her confusion, strove to conceal her face under a veil, which, like all the rest of her clothing, was dripping wet.

"Hallo!" cried Than Khan as he roughly tore the veil

from the girl's face, "what have we here? Dalima! the little 'baboe' of His Excellency the Resident."

At these words the maiden cowered down in the most abject terror. The two Chinamen exchanged a few hasty words in whispers in which the name Lim Ho could be distinguished. That name seemed to have an extraordinary effect upon the poor girl. When she heard it her face became the very picture of terror.

This Lim Ho was one of the sons of the great opium farmer at Santjoemeh and the man was madly in love with the poor little Javanese girl. He had offered her large sums of money, he had tempted her with costly gifts, but all in vain. He had addressed himself to her father, a poor peasant in the "dessa" of Kaligaweh close by the principal township, again without success. Then the wretch had sworn that, at any price, the girl should be his, even if to possess her he might have to commit a crime. He was a kind of scoundrel who would stick at nothing.

At the mention of that hateful name the girl recoiled and shrunk together in terror. She knew the man, and now she also knew the two rascals into whose power she had thus been thrown.

The two Chinamen kept on whispering to each other; they spoke in Chinese of which language neither Ardjan nor Dalima knew a single word.

Before, however, the former had time to collect his thoughts or his energies, the scoundrels were upon him. They tied up his hands and feet with a thin rope which Liem King drew out of the capacious pocket of his baggy trousers. Before he had time to defend himself Ardjan found himself helpless, tied up in the shape of a hoop. But even had there been time to resist, the poor fellow could have done nothing. He was quite unarmed, he had not had time even to snatch up his dagger-knife, and the frightful exertion of rowing the "djoekoeng" through the breakers had so completely fagged him out, that, when the men came upon him, he was lying panting for breath on the beach and quite incapable of further exertion. The low moaning sound which had guided the Chinamen to him was the sound of his gasping and panting for breath as he lay on the shore.

Having firmly secured Ardjan, the Chinamen took hold of Dalima and pinioned her also, ordering her to keep perfectly quiet and threatening to kill her should she disobey.

It was a good thing for Dalima that her captors could not see the expression on her face as they uttered their threatening warning. There passed over the girl's features an expression of contempt which would have given them food for reflection; and might have induced them to make quite sure of their fair prisoner. But of this they saw nothing, and, thinking the girl safe enough, they turned to her companion. His arms were tied behind him and fastened to his feet which had also been tightly bound. Liem King now took up a stout bamboo stick which had formed part of the rigging of the surf boat, and having passed it under Ardjan's arms they each took hold of one end of the bamboo, and put it on their shoulders, and then, with their living burden thus helplessly dangling between them they ran at a slow trot up the path, along which, a few minutes before, they had groped their way. At every jolt the poor Javanese uttered a cry of anguish. It was torture indeed that they made Ardjan endure. The whole weight of his body, bent in the most constrained attitude, was bearing upon his arms, and the whippy motion of the pliable stick made every movement almost unendurable as the Chinamen jogged slowly along. The bones of the arms upon which, as a sack, the entire body was hanging seemed at every moment about to snap, and the limbs felt as if every jog must wrench them from their sockets.

But neither Liem King nor Than Khan paid the slightest heed to Ardjan's shrieks, they kept quietly trotting along. In vain did the wretched man entreat them to kill him and so put him out of the misery he was enduring. In vain, seeing his prayers unheeded, did he hurl the most offensive epithets at the heads of his tormentors, hoping thus to provoke them to rage and goad them on to take summary vengeance. To all Ardjan's entreaties and insults, the Chinamen replied only with derisive laughter, and the "Aso tjina" (Chinese dog) repeated again and again, Than Khan, who had one hand free, repaid with a tremendous blow with his fist, the effect of which was only to increase the agony of the sufferer.

In a few minutes, however, which to Ardjan seemed an age of torture, the "djaga monjet" was reached. The ropes which tied Ardjan's feet were then untied, leaving his arms only closely pinioned. The Chinamen then ordered him to climb up the rough steps and enforced their command by pricking him with the points of their daggers. The Javanese knew well that the faintest show of resistance might cost him his life, and now that the torture of dangling on the bamboo was no longer felt, he began to take a more cheerful view of life. So he passively did as he was told, and in a few moments he was at the top and inside the hut. There the two brutes once again tied him up securely, and, in order to make even an effort of flight impossible, they fastened his hands tightly on his chest and forced the bamboo cane through the bend of the elbows which were sticking out behind his back. Thus trussed up, as it were, the least movement on the part of Ardjan occasioned the most unbearable pain to his bruised and swollen limbs. Then they laid him down on his back on the floor of the hut, and to make assurance doubly sure, they lashed him to one of the principal posts of the small building.

Having made all safe, the Chinamen went off to fetch Dalima. What they intended to do with the girl was a matter of dispute between them. Liem King proposed that they should settle by a cast of the dice which of them should possess her; but Than Khan, who was of a more practical and covetous turn of mind, explained to his companion that a good round sum of money might be got out of the son of the rich opium farmer if they delivered her into his hands. They were still debating the question when they reached the Tjatjing, where they had left their victim lying on the grass. There they soon found out that they need not have argued the matter at all; for though they searched the whole place with the utmost minuteness, they could find no trace of Dalima. Yes, they did find a trace; for behind a clump of undergrowth close to the spot where they had left the girl, they discovered the coil of rope with which they had bound her. She had, evidently, somehow or other found means to get her wrists to her mouth, and had succeeded in gnawing through the cords. Once her hands were free it was mere child's play to untie her feet and legs.

"Devil take her!" exclaimed Liem King, "that tit-bit is lost to us."

"Indeed she is," sighed Than Khan; "we have allowed a nice little sum to slip through our fingers. Lim Ho would have paid well for her."

"Now, I think," said Liem King, "the best thing will be not to breathe a word about her to the Company."

"Oh, of course, not a single word," assented Than Khan; "now that she has got away that would be most dangerous."

"But what," asked the other, "had we better do now with

Ardjan? I think we had better let him go, too. He is sure to let out all about Dalima."

"No fear," rejoined Than Khan, "he won't dare to do that. Should he utter a single word about the girl Lim Ho would have him clubbed to death."

"Well," said Liem King, pensively, "for all that I think the safest plan is to let him go."

"H'm," said the other, "why so? You know as well as I do that he ought to be on board the Kiem Ping Hin. Now, how on earth did he manage to get here in that 'djoekoeng?' Take my word for it, there is some mystery about that. Very likely it may be important to the Company to get to the bottom of that. Ah," added he, with a deep sigh of disappointment, "I only wish we had tied up that wretched girl a little more securely."

"Oh, no, don't say so!" cried Liem King, "you would have bruised those darling little wrists and dainty ankles."

"Bah!" cried Than Khan. "What nonsense, I wish we had her here; now she is off. Where can she have got to?"

"Yes," replied Liem King, "that is the question, where to look for her. But come along, let us hurry back or else we may find the other bird flown too. There is something, you know, that tells me we have made a good catch in him."

So the two rascals got back to the hut, and found Ardjan lying there quietly enough, just as they left him. He had not been able to stir hand or foot. As soon as he saw that the Chinamen came back alone his eye brightened.

"Where is Dalima?" he exclaimed, most anxiously.

The Chinamen made no answer.

"Has she got away?" he asked again.

Than Khan shook his head. It was enough, there was something so doleful in that gesture that Ardjan did not, for a moment, doubt. Dalima had escaped. Now he could breathe more freely. If only he had been equally fortunate. He had tried all he could to get rid of these accursed ropes; but, alas! his arms hurt him so frightfully he thought they were broken, and he had to give up the attempt in despair. Where might the dear girl be now? He felt but little anxiety on that score. She had managed, perhaps, to run to Kaligaweh, where her parents lived—the distance was not great—she must, by this time, be close to the dessa. Perhaps, she had taken the way to Santjoemeh, where lived the family of the Resident, as she was in his service as nurse. In that case, she would have a long journey before her, and she could not reach it before daybreak. If only then she could at once tell her whole story—then, yes, who knows, then he might even yet be rescued.

But all such reflections were roughly interrupted by Liem King, who asked him, "Where did you come from on so wild a night as this?"

"I?" said Ardjan, "why, I have come from Santjoemeh, to be sure. I intended to take Dalima to her father at Kaligaweh. The nor'-wester drove us out to sea, I rowed with might and main to get to the Moeara Tjatjing."

"What do you mean?" grinned Than Khan. "What business had you at the Moeara? Oh, now I see, you wanted, no doubt, to pay us a visit here! That is it—is it not?"

Ardjan trembled inwardly; but he replied calmly enough:

"I could not get as far as Sepoetran, and found myself drifting out to sea, so I was compelled to make for the nearest land."

"But they have been after you," exclaimed Than Khan. 'You have been fired at."

"So I have," said Ardjan. "It must have been a boat of that wretched Matamata, they must have taken me for a smuggler."

"Have you any stuff with you?" asked Than Khan. There was no reply to that question. Had these Chinamen known in what position he really was, they never would have asked him such a question as that.

"But," continued Liem King, "you are mate of the Kiem Ping Hin. How is it you are not on board of her?"

For a moment the Javanese did not know what to answer, then he said:

"Captain Awal Boep Said has given me leave to spend two days on shore."

"You go and tell your grandmother that tale, it won't do for us. What! just at this time, when there is so much work on hand?" cried Than Khan.

"Well," said Ardjan, "it is true, nevertheless."

"Very good," replied Than Khan, "the Company will soon get to know all about that."

After these words there was silence.

The Chinamen wrapped themselves up in a kind of rug or mat, and sat down cross-legged on the floor, with their heads bent forwards on their breast, and thus they seemed to be falling into a doze. Ardjan, still fastened up in the most painful way to the bamboo stick, had to lie on his back. It was pitch dark in the hut; the door and the shutters were closed to exclude, as much as possible, the cold morning air. But, when every now and then the Javanese turned his head to the right or left, he could, through the chinks of the lath floor, see that day was breaking. A greyish light began to appear under the hut, and thus Ardjan could see the filthy mud in which a number of crawling things, such as sea-eels, marsh-snakes, igunanas, and water-lizards were swarming. They were in quest of the miscellaneous offal which they were wont to find under the "djaga monjet."

For a while all was quiet, when suddenly the report of a gun shook the hut. The sound startled both the Chinamen to their feet. It was evidently a signal. Than Khan rushed to the door, and threw it open. It was then broad daylight, the sun was just about to rise, and was bathing the eastern horizon in a flood of the richest purple.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE DJAGA MONJET.

FOR a moment or two, Than Khan stood rubbing his eyes, the sudden glare of light almost blinded him after the darkness of the hut. As soon as he became somewhat accustomed to the morning light, he perceived that a great change had taken place in nature. The wind which had been howling so dismally all night long had now fallen considerably, and the thick black clouds were breaking up, while patches of clear blue sky were becoming visible on all sides. The eastern horizon was perfectly cloudless, and the sun rising in full glory was bathing all he touched in the purest gold. It was a magnificent spectacle, certainly, that morning of calm after the night of storm; but neither Than Khan nor his companion seemed to pay the slightest heed to these beauties of nature. The two Celestials were not troubling their minds about the sun; they were eagerly scanning the surface of the sea, and that not for the purpose of admiring the stately roll of the long breakers; they were looking out for something quite different.

Yonder, at a considerable distance from the shore, they could just see a ship dancing on the waves. They could make her out with the naked eye to be a schooner-brig, which, under shortened sail, was lying close to the wind, and was evidently purposely keeping away from the land. She had some kind of signal flying; but what it was they could not make out. Liem King then produced a ship's telescope, which was kept stowed away under the "attaps" in a corner of the roof, and which had long since lost its original colour, being thickly covered with a coating of dirt and dust.

The Chinaman handled the glass as one who was familiar with its use, and, after looking for awhile, he turned to his mate, and said: "The letters T.F.N.W. on a red ground. That must be the Kiem Ping Hin. She ought to have come in last night, and—"

"She is trying to anchor, I suppose," said Than Khan.

"No, she is not," replied Liem King; "she is only trying to keep out of the smuggling radius."

"Well," cried Than Khan, "that's cool enough anyhow. Why! only last night we had the Matamata here."

"Why," said the other, "she is safe enough. Where she is now lying the steamer could not get at her, and, what's more, she is flying the British ensign. Under those colours no one will dare to meddle with her. The Dutch are frightened to death of the English."

After looking through his glass at the schooner for a few moments longer Liem King exclaimed: "They are lowering the boat!"

"Then one of us," said Than Khan, "will have to run to the landing place at the Tjatjing."

"Very well, you go," said Liem King.

"No, you," said the other.

"Why should we not both go together?" asked Liem King.

"Certainly not," rejoined Than Khan. "Would you," he asked as he pointed to Ardjan, "leave this fellow here alone and unwatched?"

"Perhaps you are right," assented the other, "let us toss up for it."

"All right," replied Than Khan, "I don't mind."

One of them then produced some white pebbles about the size of beans among which there were a few black ones. With a certain amount of dexterity he flung them upon a wooden board which seemed made for the purpose. Liem King counted the throw to see how many black ones were lying together.

It was Than Khan's turn next.

"I have won," he exclaimed. "You see I have seven black together. You had but five."

"Very good," said Liem King. "I shall go."

"But mind," said the other, "not a word about Dalima!"

"You trust me," was the answer.

A strange scornful smile passed over Ardjan's features.

Than Khan sat down cross-legged in the doorway of the hut, placing himself in such a manner that while he had a clear view of the bay before him, he could at the same time watch every movement Ardjan might attempt to make.

Not a single action on board the schooner escaped the Chinaman's watchful eye.

He saw the smuggler lower her boat, he then saw five or six Chinese get into her. The little craft, rowed by a Javanese crew, then put off and got under weigh. It soon got into the seething breakers and as Than Khan watched the tremendous exertions of the rowers, he could not help admiring the cool steady way in which the helmsman kept her head firmly to the waves.

"That must be Lim Ho himself," he muttered.

Ardjan shuddered at the mention of that name. "Lim Ho!" he exclaimed, his voice betraying his terror.

"Yes," said Than Khan, "in a few minutes they will all be here."

Just then the boat was getting into the Moeara. He was right, the light craft manned by eight stout rowers was flying through the water and had got clear of the dangerous surf.

Once under the lee of the bow-nets and fairly in the bay, the boat was in comparatively smooth water and darted into the mouth of the Tjatjing.

Liem King stood at the landing place waiting to receive his countrymen and he began at once to lead the way to the little watch-house.

The five Chinamen had no sooner stepped ashore than the Javanese crew began to make all possible haste to unload the boat.

A number of small tins and barrels lay piled up in the bottom and these they brought to land and most carefully stowed away, hiding them in the sand under the bushes which grew hard by.

"Jolly stuff that black butter," said one of the fellows, as he pointed to the barrels.

The small casks looked as if they had just come out of some Dutch farmhouse. They were all sealed with green wax and bore the well-known stamp of Van der Leeuw.

"I wish I could get hold of a couple of taël of that butter," said another of the crew with a laugh.

"Well," said another, "you can be off presently to the opium den of Babah Tjoa Tjong Ling and there you can get as much as you like of it. You will find it easy enough to get rid of your hardly earned wages."

In a few minutes all the tins and barrels were safely stowed away and then the Javanese crew followed the steps of their Chinese masters to the "djanga monjet."

When the five Chinamen had entered the little hut, the examination of Ardjan, who was still lying on the floor in the same painful position, was commenced at once.

On the way to the hut Liem King had told his master as much as he deemed prudent about Ardjan's capture; but not a word did he breathe about Dalima.

Lim Ho listened with attention to his report. This Lim Ho was a tall, powerfully-built Chinaman. He was the chief of that band of smugglers, about five-and-twenty years of age. He had a wan yellow complexion, and a false, evil look in his slanting eyes.

When he heard it was Ardjan, the mate, who had been caught, he could not repress a smile of satisfaction.

As soon as Liem King had made his report, he asked in a tone of assumed indifference:

"Was the fellow alone when you came upon him?"

"Oh yes, quite alone," readily replied Liem King.

Lim Ho showed that he was greatly disappointed at the news.

"He came ashore in a 'djoekoeng,' I think you told me?" he asked.

"He did, sir," replied Liem King.

"Could the 'djoekoeng' have turned over at sea?" continued Lim Ho.

"Very likely," replied the wily Chinaman.

"When Than Khan and myself found the 'djoekoeng,'" he continued, "Ardjan was lying exhausted and wet through on the beach—he looked as if he had been washing about in the water, and the bamboos of the rigging were smashed to pieces."

"All right," said Lim Ho superciliously, "we shall hear all about that presently."

As he entered the hut, he did not deign so much as to cast a look at Ardjan; but abruptly asked him:

"What made you run away?"

"I was homesick," was the reply, "I was heartily sick of the ship and wanted to get back to the 'dessa.'"

"Indeed!" sneered Lim Ho. "And that was the reason, I suppose, why you took Dalima with you?"

Ardjan kept silence; Liem King and Than Khan were growing as pale as death.

"Where was the girl drowned?" suddenly asked Lim Ho.

"Drowned," shouted Ardjan, "you say drowned. Have they drowned her, then?"

"Have they drowned her?" said Lim Ho in a mocking tone of voice. "Was not the 'djoekoeng' upset when the pair of you tried to run away in her? Where did that take place? perhaps Dalima may somehow have been able to get out."

"Able to get out," repeated Ardjan. "But the 'djoekoeng' did not turn over at all," he exclaimed. "We both of us got ashore. She was terribly frightened at the storm to be sure, but quite unhurt, and I was completely exhausted with rowing."

"But," roared Lim Ho, "what has become of her, then?"

"That, I cannot tell you," replied Ardjan, "you must ask Liem King and Than Khan."

These two worthies stood trembling with apprehension.

"Did you fellows hear that?" shouted Lim Ho in a towering passion. "Did you hear that? I am waiting for you—what is your answer?"

"I do not know what has become of the girl," stammered Than Khan.

"She has, very likely, been devoured by a crocodile, for all I know," added Liem King.

"Did she get to land? Yes or no?" roared Lim Ho, while in his impatience he stamped about the little hut, shaking it to its foundations.

"She did," replied Ardjan. "Those two scoundrels first tied me up, and then they bound Dalima's arms and legs. They brought me in here, and after that they went out in quest of Dalima. But all I know is they came back without her."

Lim Ho's piercing eyes were watching the two Chinamen as Ardjan was speaking.

"I have no doubt," Liem King again ventured to say, "that some crocodile has carried her off."

"Or maybe," said Than Khan, "a tiger has got hold of her."

Lim Ho applied a small whistle to his lips. He blew a shrill piercing note, and at the summons one of the Javanese crew at once presented himself at the door of the hut.

"Call your mates," ordered Lim Ho. In an instant the whole boat's crew was present.

"Tie me up those scoundrels," cried Lim Ho, "make them fast," he said, as he pointed to Liem King and Than Khan. "Tie them up, and securely too, do you hear me!"

The men readily obeyed, it was the work of an instant. Nothing in this world gave these fellows greater delight than to be allowed to lay their hands upon a Chinaman. They set to work as roughly, as brutally as they could. The knots were tied and they hauled upon the ropes with a will. The wretched victims groaned with the pain.

Oh! if ever it should come to an outbreak, then woe to the Celestials in Java, they would find but little mercy. Who knows—were such a catastrophe to take place they might not be the only race to suffer. There are others who might get into trouble too!

When both the Chinese spies were firmly secured, Lim Ho called to his men.

"Now, my lads, now for a hunt! A girl—little Dalima—has escaped from us and we must get her back. Five hundred 'ringgiets' six dollars to the man who finds her and brings her in!"

With a ringing cheer the boat's crew dashed from the hut.

When they had left, Lim Ho ordered one of his followers to hand him his pipe. He filled the small bowl with the slender bamboo stem with extremely fine-cut tobacco, then he lit the pipe and began to blow the smoke from his nostrils. Thereupon he took a seat on the only chair the hut contained. It was a rough and clumsy piece of furniture, cut out of the wood with a clasp-knife. The other Chinamen sat down cross-legged on the floor, while their captain once again turned to Ardjan.

"Come now," said he, "just you tell us how you managed to get Dalima out of the Kiem Ping Hin. You knew well enough, did you not, that I wanted the girl? But, look you, no lies! No lies, mind you! Your life is in my hands; you are aware of that, I hope."

Ardjan could but utter a deep sigh. He begged that his hands might be slackened if but a little. "To be trussed up like this," said he, "is unbearable torture."

"No, no," laughed Lim Ho. "First let us hear what you have to say, then we shall see what we can do for you."

Nevertheless he gave the order to remove the bamboo cane which had so long tortured the poor Javanese, and as soon as that was removed the Chinaman said:

"Now, speak up, I am listening to you!"

"You are aware," began Ardjan, "that I am mate on board the Kiem Ping Hin. Yesterday afternoon we were lying at anchor behind Poeloe Kalajan which is not far from Santjoemeh, when a 'djoekoeng' rowed up to us in which a couple of your countrymen were seated. At first I thought that they came alongside to take off some of the smuggled opium with which the schooner is partly loaded. I, therefore, threw them a rope and helped them up the ship's side. But, instead of coming to fetch anything off, they brought something aboard with them. It was a heavy sack which they carefully hoisted on deck, and which had something of the appearance of a human form. However, that was no business of mine, it was not the first time that I had seen that kind of thing going on. I even lent a hand at carrying the load into the captain's cabin, and I laughed and joked with the Chinamen at the fun Awal Boep Said was going to have.

"When, shortly after, the captain came on board, I told him of the bit of good luck that had befallen him, and I fancied he would be mightily pleased Not a bit of it, instead of at once rushing down into his cabin, he quietly remained on deck, simply ordering me to keep a sharp look out as he was expecting some friends. And, true enough, a few hours later you, Lim Ho, came on board with two of your followers. You reached the schooner just in time. Night was rapidly falling, and a north-westerly storm was blowing up. No sooner were you aboard than it began to blow furiously. The moment I saw you, an unpleasant feeling came over me, and quite involuntarily my thoughts at once flew to the sack which I had helped to get aboard, and which then was lying on the bed in the cabin. I longed to get away down below to have a look; but the captain, who was watching the storm that was brewing, ordered the men to the braces and had a second anchor brought out. I had, of course, to take my share of duty and could not leave the deck.

"When, an hour or so after, I got to the cabin, I found you there stretched out on a couch. You were hard at it smoking opium, your pipe was in your hand, and with evident satisfaction you were swallowing down the smoke.—

"I knew well enough what all this meant. A man whose senses are dulled and deadened by habitual excess, must find something to rouse him. I knew that you had some little pigeon in your clutches, and that you were seeking to recruit by opium your exhausted powers. Your object was to get the greatest possible amount of enjoyment out of your victim—You know the properties of opium, and how to make use of it.

"Now all this did not concern me, I merely chuckled—I thought, that's a common thing enough! I remember a hadji telling me that opium is a gift of Ngahebi Mohammed, and the ever-blessed in Paradise use it to renew their strength and thus are for ever beloved by the houris.

"But yet, I could not get rid of that strange feeling that told me all was not well. I could not get rid of my anxious curiosity. Dalima has long ago been promised to me by her parents. She is to be my wife as soon as I can get together a few more 'ringgiets' which will enable me to purchase a yoke of oxen. The day on which I can get them together, is to be my wedding-day.

"But Lim Ho," and at these words the voice of the Javanese began to hiss and assume an almost threatening tone, "but Lim Ho, I know also that you covet the maiden,—I know what treasures you have offered her—I know what sums you have offered her parents as the price of her virtue, and of her innocence.

"I made up my mind—I must see who was there in the cabin.—Oh! I had not, at that time, the least suspicion that it was Dalima! She had rejected all your advances with the utmost contempt. Her father had even threatened to kreese you. How could the 'baboe' of the Ioean Resident have come into your power?—You see it was impossible!"

"Yes, yes, as you say it was quite impossible," said Lim Ho with a grin, excited by the story of Ardjan. "I say, Ong Kwat, just tell us how the girl came into your hands!"

"No need of that," resumed Ardjan, "I know all about it. Dalima told me the whole story in the 'djoekoeng.' Yesterday she was out for a walk with her master's youngest child in the lane behind the Residence. The boy in his play, flung his ball into a ditch by the side of the road. A Chinaman happened to be passing at the time and Dalima requested him to fetch the toy out of the water. He did so at her request; but instead of returning the ball to the child he pitched it as far as he could into the garden. The boy ran off eagerly to fetch it, and Dalima was looking after the child, when suddenly the Chinaman flung himself upon her, gagged her, and before she could utter a single cry threw a sack over her head. Thus muffled he dragged her to the end of the lane, and put her into a 'djoekoeng' which was lying in the ditch. The boat at once put off, and in an hour's time was alongside the Kiem Ping Hin."

"Just so!" exclaimed Lim Ho. "Now, Ong Kwat, is not that just about how you managed it?"

The man thus addressed grinned, nodded his head and added, "Yes, master, for four whole days I had been on the prowl for that catch."

"Now, Ardjan," resumed Lim Ho, "you may go on again; but mind you, no lies."

The Javanese continued: "As I entered the cabin I gave a hasty look round. You, Lim Ho, were partially unconscious, still smoking opium. You had not got to that stage when the drug excites the passions to madness. Your attendant was intent upon kneading the 'mandat' balls. There was no one in the cabin but you two, so I ventured to creep in, and, by the light of the lamp that was burning there, I saw—Dalima.

"With one bound I was at her side, in an instant I had severed the ropes which tied her, and in another moment I had dragged her out of the cabin. Thereupon I flew forward, got some clothes which I happened to have by me, and in a few seconds was back again with them. Dalima slipped them on, and thus partially disguised I hid her under a heap of sails which happened to be lying in the stern.

"Meanwhile the storm was raging in all its fury, and I have no doubt that it was chiefly owing to the noise of the wind that we had been able to get clear of the cabin unperceived. Captain Awal Boep Said, like a good Mussulman, was telling his beads, and from time to time uttered an 'Allah achbar' (God is great), or a 'Bismillah' (God be praised). The other men were all taking shelter in the forecastle, and your servants were lying sea-sick in their bunks.

"Of these favourable circumstances I made the best use I could. The 'djoekoeng,' in which Dalima had come alongside, was still lying there dancing on the waves. I took hold of the painter and drew the boat up to the side. The girl slid down into her along a rope which was hanging over the ship's side. I followed her, seized upon a paddle and then I cast her adrift, and the storm soon drove us far from the Kiem Ping Hin.

"I was in hopes that I might succeed in reaching that part of the beach which lies nearest to the Resident's house; but when the 'djoekoeng' got under the Poeloe Kalajan the wind got hold of her and we had to drift at the mercy of the waves.

"Then I managed to set the wings which were lying in the bottom of the boat. Without them we must certainly have capsized and been drowned. I kept on rowing with all my might; for I knew that once we were driven past the cape there would be an end of us. At length—at length—I managed to struggle through the breakers. One more effort and we were safe at the Moeara Tjatjing! The moment danger was over I fell down utterly exhausted, and before I had time to recover Than Khan and Liem King had discovered us. They pinioned us both, Dalima and me. Me they carried off to this hut; what has become of the girl I don't know. I have not seen or heard of her since. Now then, Lim Ho," said he in conclusion, "that is the whole truth."

For a short time silence was preserved, Lim Ho seemed to reflect on what he had heard, and no one in the hut ventured to disturb his reflections.

At length he spoke, turning to Than Khan and Liem King, and said:

"Well, what have you to say to all that?" Neither of them answered a word.

"Do you intend to answer, yes or no?" roared Lim Ho in a furious passion, as he dealt Than Khan, who lay bound on the floor, a heavy kick in the side.

"The Javanese lies," cried the Chinaman, writhing with pain. "We have seen nothing of the girl!"

"He probably got her off into the woods," added Liem King, "before we came up."

"I would gladly have given my life for Dalima," cried Ardjan, "but I was lying on the beach utterly prostrate; I could not defend her, sir, I could not defend myself. I am telling you the truth. These two scoundrels must know what they have done with her!"

Lim Ho muttered a few words to himself and appeared to be thinking what he would do next, when voices were heard outside the hut, the voices of the boat's crew who had been hunting for Dalima, and were now returning with the tidings that their search had been fruitless, and that they had nowhere been able to find the girl.

Ardjan's face gleamed with satisfaction as he heard it, and he at once grew calmer.

"Unless," said one of the Javanese boatmen, holding up a coil of rope, "you call this a trace of her. I found this close by the spot where we landed."

Lim Ho fixed his eye upon the two wretched spies. They held their peace, that silent proof effectually closed their mouths.

"These are," said Ardjan, in a much quieter tone of voice than that in which he had spoken before, "these are the cords with which they bound Dalima's wrists and ankles. I recognise them perfectly."

Lim Ho hereupon uttered but two words; but they were words which caused Ardjan and Liem King and Than Khan to shudder with terror. In most abject terms they prayed for mercy. But Lim Ho remained deaf to all their entreaties, he scarcely deigned to cast a look at them; but now and then in his cold rage he would deal a savage kick at the body of one or the other of the prostrate Chinamen.

In a few abrupt words he gave his orders to the Javanese crew. Whatever his commands might be, his men were but too ready to carry them out. A couple of them at once left the hut while the others set Ardjan and the two Chinamen upon their legs and prepared to take them out of the cabin.

"Oh, sir, have pity, have mercy upon us!" Than Khan exclaimed in truly piteous accents.

"Where is Dalima?" was the furious rejoinder.

"We don't know where she is!" cried both the Chinamen.

"And you!" shouted Lim Ho turning to Ardjan; "do you know what has become of her?"

"I know nothing about it," was the reply. "I think that most probably she may have got back to the Residence."

"Have mercy, have mercy!" shrieked Liem King.

"What? mercy on such brutes as you?" scornfully said Lim Ho.

"But," they asked; "what harm have we done?"

"I will tell you what you have done," sneered Lim Ho. "You have had Dalima in your power and you have been pleased to let her go. That's what you have done and you shall suffer for it. And you!" he hissed out in fury, as he turned to Ardjan, "you have dared to carry the girl away. Oh, you shall pay for it!"

"But she is my bride," pleaded the wretched man.

"Your bride, indeed," said Lim Ho with concentrated rage. "Your bride? Do you think a pretty girl like Dalima is destined to be the bride of a Javanese dog like you? But it was last night that you carried her off from the Kiem Ping Hin. Might you perhaps in that 'djoekoeng'—"

A disgusting leer of disappointed passion passed over the features of Lim Ho as he uttered the half finished question.

"No, no, by Allah!" fiercely exclaimed the Javanese. "Dalima is as pure as the white flower of which she bears the name. But," added he in a calmer mood, "you know better than that. You know that in such weather as we had last night I had very little time for trifling and love-making."

"That's lucky for you," cried Lim Ho; "had you so much as touched her too freely I would this very moment drive my kreese into you. As it is, I will simply punish you for having run away. I will consent to forget that Dalima is anything to you. But," he added with an odious smile, "you seem to forget that the matter is somewhat serious for you. You ran away, remember, to give the coastguard notice of the arrival and of the movements of the Kiem Ping Hin—"

"That is not true," hastily interrupted Ardjan.

"That, you see, amounts to treachery—treachery to the Company," continued Lim Ho without taking the slightest notice of Ardjan's indignant denial. "It's a serious matter as you know."

"I tell you it is all a lie," cried the wretched Javanese, driven to despair by the other's manner. "It is all a lie. I ran away to save Dalima from your filthy clutches; you may drive your dagger into me for that, but I am no traitor."

"I tell you again," replied Lim Ho with perfect calmness, "that your intention was to betray the secrets of the Company. You know the laws of the Company, do you not? I will therefore give you the same punishment as to those two scoundrels. I will then have you put on board the Kiem Ping Hin; not as her mate; oh, no, but simply as a slave; and you will be put ashore at Poeloe Bali and there you will have to remain on pain of death. You will remain there, I say, as long as ever the Company shall see fit."

"Oh no!" wildly cried Ardjan, "not that, anything but that; rather kill me at once. I have not played the spy; I am no traitor. I will not, I cannot live away from Dalima!"

The face of Lim Ho plainly showed the bitter hatred he felt towards his rival—a hatred the more intense because he knew that Ardjan possessed the fair young girl's heart.

He did not, however, vouchsafe any further reply; but gave a sign to the boatmen.

With blows and kicks they drove the prisoners before them down the rough steps. They revelled in the brutality which they were allowed to show to these unhappy wretches.

With their hands tightly bound behind their backs the three were half driven, half pushed down, and being quite unable to steady themselves they tumbled down into the filthy mud beneath and grovelled there amidst the shouts of laughter of their tormentors until they were again roughly put on their feet.

Lim Ho and his pig-tailed companions heartily joined in the merriment and thus encouraged the rough sailors in their unmerciful handling of the miserable captives.

CHAPTER III.

HOEKOEM KAMADOOG—THE VAN GULPENDAM FAMILY.

NOTHING could be more strange, and indeed awful, than the contrast between the fair face of nature and the hideous cruelty which man was about to perpetrate on that little sequestered spot on the north coast of Java.

The storm which had been raging furiously during the night had now fallen to a fresh yet warm breeze. The leaves of the singular forest of mangrove were softly rustling in the wind, and the waves, which a few hours ago were madly dashing on the shore, now were quietly running up the beach with pleasant and melodious murmurs. Indeed, the prospect from the hut over the little bay of the Moeara Tjatjing, enclosed by its two headlands, was picturesque in the extreme. Under the bright beams of the early morning sun, the intense blue of the sea was glittering with indescribable purity and brilliancy, the surface of the ocean was still heaving, the waves still were following each other as in pursuit, here and there a breaker might still be seen topped by a snow-white cap of foam; but there was nothing angry in the scene. The bosom of Amphitrite still heaved, but all fierce and angry passions seemed to have died away. At some little distance from the land the schooner Kiem Ping Hin was dancing on the water, rising and falling gracefully, while the British ensign floated at the peak.

Just in front of the hut, in which took place the stormy scenes we have described in the former chapters, and close by the small group of "Saoe" trees we have mentioned, there stood a clump of "Niboeng" palms. Straight and smooth as candles were their stems, and high up in the air their feathery tops were waving to the breeze. On all sides, excepting on that of the sea, the mangrove wood, with its maze of tangled roots, surrounded the hut as with an impenetrable wall.

The bay to which Lim Ho and his attendants had dragged their unhappy prisoners was thus perfectly lonely, closely screened from every human eye.

As soon as they had arrived at the spot, Lim Ho made a signal to his men. In an instant the prisoners had their clothes torn from their bodies, and stark naked they were firmly lashed to the smooth stems of three palm trees. The ropes, which had already served to confine the limbs of Dalima, now were used to tie Ardjan and the two Chinese spies to the trunks of these trees, which, to them, were to become stakes at which they were destined to endure the most excruciating agony. The victims knew well what was in store for them, and kept anxiously looking round to see what would happen; their eyes, however, glaring around with wild terror, could not, at once, discover what they sought, and what they were every moment dreading to see. Although the tropical sun was burning down on their backs, yet they were trembling in every limb, as if shivering with cold; their hands were fastened high up above their heads, and the ropes were passed round their loins and knee-joints. Thus they could not make the slightest movement without extreme pain, for the ropes being plaited of "Iemoetoe" were hard, rough, and prickly.

Suddenly Than Khan uttered a startled cry, he had been anxiously looking round, and he now saw a couple of sailors coming up from the wood, each carefully bearing a bundle of leaves. The wretched man knew at a glance that the hour of torture was at hand. The leaves which the sailors bore well deserve description. They were broad and heart-shaped, and were attached to twigs resembling brushwood. The edges of the leaves were roughly jagged like the teeth of a saw, and their upper and under surfaces were covered with white hairy down. They were leaves of the "Kamadoog," the devil thistle, the most terrible plant perhaps which the earth produces. With infinite precaution—a precaution which needs no explanation—the Javanese sailors made, of these leafy twigs, three broom-like scourges, around the handles of which they carefully wrapped some grass and bits of rag. When he saw his men thus armed, Lim Ho gave the signal to begin. Three sailors stepped up to the victims, and with the twigs began to strike their backs, their loins, their thighs, and the calves of their legs. Then was enacted a hideous, but most curious scene. It was not, properly speaking, any scourging at all, the blows which they inflicted were as light as possible; they rather flipped or stroked the flesh of their victims, and it looked as if they were engaged in simply driving away insects or troublesome flies from the naked bodies. Now and then, one or other of them would give a somewhat harder flip, as if some obstinate fly refused to be dislodged from the spot. But the features of the unfortunate wretches, who were suffering this apparently playful scourging, were in horrible contrast with the seeming gentleness of the treatment. The faces of Ardjan and of his companions in misfortune were actually distorted with terror, their eyes were starting from the sockets. Whereever those dreadful leaves lightly fell on the skin, the body at once shrunk away in pain, the limbs began to quiver, the muscles began to work up and to stiffen in knots, as if drawn together by violent cramp. But still that gentle flicking and stroking went on. The sufferers began to writhe and twist about their bodies in intolerable anguish. Still the heartless executioners went on with their hideous task. The miserable victims panted for breath, a low, most pitiful moaning escaped from their lips; they gnashed their teeth with agony, they bit their lips until the blood came; but all to no purpose—nothing could bring them relief.

"Have mercy, sir," they moaned with the piteous wail of a dying child.

But Lim Ho had no mercy to show his wretched victims, he waved his hand to the executioners, who, at that sign, entirely changed their mode of operation, and now the gentle fanning

was replaced by a severe downright flogging. The blows, laid on with the full strength of the sailors, rained down upon the bare bodies of the tortured wretches, their skin resounded under the pattering of the leaves, which, less barbarous than the men who wielded them, began to tear and fly from their stems.

As soon as that flogging commenced, the prisoners no longer moaned, they roared, they yelled, they howled with anguish. It was the cry of a wild beast wounded to death, which gathers up its remaining strength for one dying roar.

The limbs of the miserable men now not only shrank and writhed; but with the convulsive energy which only such extremity of torture could lend, they clasped with their legs the smooth trunks of the trees, they seemed to try and sink into them and bury themselves in the wood. It was an awful spectacle, and yet, strange to say, no wounds could be seen, no contusions, no livid spots even; nothing at all in fact to account for such unheard-of suffering. The skin only looked somewhat puffy, somewhat red and inflamed, and covered with very small blisters. The wounds which the bodies of the victims bore were serious enough, it is true; but they had nothing to do with the leaves of the terrible nettle. In their almost superhuman efforts to burst their bonds, and in their frantic contortions, the sufferers had forced the ropes into the flesh, and here and there the strands had cut their way to the bone, so that streams of blood were pouring along their arms, along their thighs and loins, and were forming broad red spots on the soft slippery soil. That anguish must have been acute enough in itself; but it was nothing compared to the torture occasioned by the leaves of the devil-thistle.

At length the instruments of torture had become well nigh stripped, there was left in fact only the bare twigs, on which here and there a few tattered leaves were still dangling, the poisonous leaves lay scattered in all directions, faded, torn, and shapeless about the feet of the sufferers. But, even then, Lim Ho did not think of causing the torture to cease, he seemed to be bent on utterly destroying his victims. He ordered the men to stop for a few moments. It was not because he felt any pity. Not at all, he merely caused the half dead bodies to be sprinkled with salt water, which, if possible, augmented the torments they endured. The monster was, in fact, on the point of resuming his inhuman flogging, when suddenly a cry was raised, "The police, the police!"

In furious haste Lim Ho and his assistants flew up to the tortured Chinamen. In a moment they had severed the cords which bound them to the trees, and the next instant they were dragging the wretches who were curling and twisting in their agony along the rough path which led to the landing-place where their boat lay moored. Two of Lim Ho's men would have performed the same office for Ardjan, but the shouts of the rescuing party became louder every instant, the men were stricken with panic, took to their heels, and with all speed rejoined their retreating comrades.

They got to the boat just in time, for they had no sooner got into her, before five or six policemen led on by Dalima and closely followed by a crowd of people came to the spot.

"Allah," exclaimed the young girl as she caught sight of Ardjan, who was still tied up to the tree, moaning with pain, and whose almost lifeless body was hanging like a sack in the somewhat slackened ropes; "Allah, what in the world have they done to him!"

In a moment the unfortunate man was surrounded, his bonds were severed, and he was laid down gently on a mat which somebody had run to fetch from the little watch-house. But he could not utter a word. He yelled with pain, and rolled about on the ground writhing like a crushed worm.

"Oh, my God!" he moaned most piteously, "I am in pain! in pain!"

"Where is the pain?" cried Dalima, as she sat crouching down beside him.

"It is the kamadoog," the sufferer managed to say between his sobs of anguish.

"The kamadoog!" cried the bystanders in horror.

It was plain enough now. One of the spectators had taken up a few torn leaves, and at once recognised the terrible nettle. Every man in the crowd turned pale with horror. And truly the kamadoog is a dreadful plant. The slightest contact with its formidable leaves occasions a violent itching, painful as a severe burn; and, when used as an instrument of torture, it causes the most intolerable suffering, for at least seven days; it makes the limbs stiffen, and produces a burning fever, which not unfrequently ends in the most painful death.

"Has anyone here any 'sirihkalk?'" (chalk made of sea-shells) cried Dalima.

Some few of the bystanders had with them the "sirih," which they are fond of chewing. They unwrapped the sirih-leaf in which were the pinang-nut, the chalk, and the tobacco, which form this highly-prized chew, and gave the chalk to the girl, who hastened to anoint the sufferer with the paste-like alkali. But, unfortunately, so great was the surface which had been exposed to the stroke of the hairy leaves, that the supply of "sirih-chalk" was altogether inadequate, and only a very small portion of the blisters could be treated with the remedy. Dalima was in despair. There was nothing else for it but to carry Ardjan into the hut, which afforded a shelter from the burning sun. Then some of the men hurried away to fetch a supply of oil and chalk, which they hoped would mitigate the pain, and check the fever. By evening, if all were well, Ardjan might perhaps have so far recovered as to bear the fatigue of being moved to more convenient quarters.

While these remedies were being applied to poor Ardjan, the boat in which Lim Ho had put off, was being rowed past the djaga monjet, and was getting out of the little bay. The policemen stood on the shore calling to the crew to come back; but no one took the slightest notice of their summons, and, as they had no firearms with them to enforce obedience, the only reply they got was a derisive cheer, and a shout of defiance.

As he rowed by the djaga monjet, Lim Ho had plainly recognised Dalima, who, actively employed in assisting her tortured lover, was running about, in and out, here and there.

The sight of her literally maddened the brutal Chinaman; he was on the point of ordering his boat's crew to return and row to land. But, in another instant, he came to himself, and recovered his reason. It would indeed have been the act of a madman to try and carry off the girl just then. He knew that he could place great dependence upon the power of his gold; but yet, in full daylight, in the very face of all those people, he felt he could hardly try its influence upon the native police. So he could only shake his fist in impotent rage, and the word to return remained unspoken.

The boat swiftly glided out of the Moeara Tjatjing, and at once made for the Kiem Ping Hin, which was already loosening her sails, and waiting impatiently for the return of her boat's crew. As they mounted the deck, Captain Awal Boep Said came up to report to Lim Ho that the smoke of a steamer could just be seen on the horizon. "Probably," he added, "it is the Matamata, she was here yesterday."

"Those white blockheads," muttered Lim Ho, with a scornful laugh. "At night they have their coloured lights up, and we can tell them miles away. By day they take care to send up a cloud of smoke which no one can mistake. I will bet they have not discovered us yet, while we have had our eye on her ever so long ago."

"It is the guard-ship, sir, likely enough. What are your orders?" said the captain.

"The wind has risen somewhat with the sun," replied Lim Ho. "Set sail at once, and steer for Bali."

A quarter of an hour later, the Kiem Ping Hin was gracefully heeling over to the freshening breeze, and, under full sail, was flying to the eastward. When, much later on, the Matamata came to the Moeara Tjatjing, the smuggler, an excellent sailing craft, was on the horizon; she was nothing more than a faint white speck on the deep blue sea. The clumsy old guard-ship, which, under favourable circumstances, could not make more than six knots, and might perhaps do eight knots under extra pressure, had not the smallest chance of overtaking the rakish schooner, running eleven knots before the breeze. In less than an hour, the vessels were out of sight of one another altogether.

Meanwhile, what had befallen Dalima that she thus managed to come up at the right moment of time to rescue Ardjan from compulsory exile? As soon as she had succeeded in gnawing through the rope which tied her wrists, no very difficult task for her sharp white teeth—she plucked asunder the knots by which her feet were confined. That did not take long, and with a gesture of contempt she flung the cords aside and was hastening from the spot. For a moment or two, however, she stood still, considering whether she ought not to go straight to the djaga monjet, perhaps she might be of some service to Ardjan. At that moment, however, she caught the voices of the two Chinamen who were coming down the pathway in quest of her. This at once brought her to a decision and thoroughly terrified she ran off at the top of her speed in the opposite direction. As she was speeding along she made up her mind to go straight to her mistress and implore her aid. But, the question was, would she listen to her story, would she help her? Well, if she would not, then she would go to the Resident, he surely could not refuse to hear her.

Thus, like a hunted roe she flew along, the thick forest had no terrors for her, she was a true child of Nature and knew her road well, and so, in a few seconds, she had disappeared among the tangled roots of the mangrove.

It was in the early morning that she reached the grounds of the house. The first thing she saw under the half open verandah or "pandoppo" was the Resident's daughter. Her young mistress was quite alone, she was lying back in a comfortable rocking-chair and was reading a book in which she seemed wholly absorbed.

So Dalima glided very softly into the pandoppo and, without making the least sound, with a graceful motion seated herself cross-legged on the floor close to the maiden who continued gently rocking herself as she read. "Nana," said Dalima in the softest whisper which sounded like a gentle sigh, "Nana!"

At the sound the young girl gave a sudden start, she dropped her book and springing up from her seat, "Siapa ada?" (who is there) she cried half in terror, half in surprise.

The daughter of the Resident stood there for a few moments in the rays of the early sun, a perfect picture of loveliness. Her forehead of the purest ivory-white was surrounded by a rich mass of glossy dark-brown curls, her nose and chin might have served as models to a sculptor. But, though the features were faultlessly regular, the whole face was full of animation and of life. The lips of the rosiest red and of exquisite form resembled a freshly opened rosebud, the cheeks were tinged with the glow of health and the large deep-brown eyes were full of tenderness and plainly spoke of a gentle and loving disposition within. The neck and bust of the young girl were modestly veiled under the folds of a tastefully arranged "Kabaja" which, however, could not hide the well-filled and perfectly rounded form it strove to conceal.

"Who is there?" she had cried as startled she had sprung up from her chair.

"It is I, Nana," whispered Dalima in a scarcely audible voice.

The fair young girl, whom we have tried faintly to depict to the reader, was called Anna. In ordinary conversation the servants usually addressed her as "Nonna" (Miss). But Dalima, either by reason of her youth or it may be because she was shy and gentle of nature, was Anna's special favourite and enjoyed certain privileges with her young mistress over the other servants; she was indeed looked upon in the light of a companion, and so she always used to call her "Nonna Anna" which was first contracted into "Nonanna," and then became simply "Nana." Thus the reader will perceive that the name "Nana" has nothing whatever in common with Zola's disgusting production, nor yet with the inhuman monster who made himself so sadly notorious at Cawnpore.

At the words "It is I, Nana," Anna looked down and no sooner saw Dalima seated at her feet than she recovered from her scare. She offered to raise the maiden who, however, maintained her position on the floor of the verandah. "You here, Dalima," cried she; "where in the world have you been? Mamma is dreadfully angry with you. Where have you come from?"

"Nana," she replied, "I have been carried off!"

"By whom?" asked Anna.

"By some of Lim Ho's men," said Dalima.

"Lim Ho?" cried Anna now really frightened, "Lim Ho? What, have you been in his power?"

"Yes I have," said the young girl.

"What, all night?"

"No," replied Dalima, "No, not all night; Allah has been my protection and—"

"So, so! That gadabout has come home at last, has she?" cried a voice which caused both the girls to start with terror.

It was Anna's mother, who just then came into the pandoppo without having been noticed either by her daughter or by Dalima.

She came straight from her bathroom as was evident from the rich black hair which flowed waving down her back, and had completely wetted the kabaja she wore, while she had covered her neck and shoulders with a bathing-towel of the finest material.

Bending her head backwards she drew the towel from under her hair and handed it to the nènèh (old Javanese woman) who followed her, with the order to go and dry it immediately.

Madam Laurentia van Gulpendam, whose maiden name was Termolen, was a stately matron, fully thirty-five years of age, and was still extremely beautiful. Years and maternity had not made much impression upon her charms. She had but one child, Anna, and fearing that the natural duties of a mother might impair her beauty, she had confided her daughter to the care of a nurse. In spite, however, of all precautions, the influence of time was now beginning to make itself felt, and though it could not be denied that Laurentia carried the load of years proudly enough, yet lately she had found the necessity of bringing certain powders and certain mysterious toilette-confections into requisition, to help out the somewhat fading complexion and (to use an elegant expression of her husband who had had something to do with the sea, and was always interlarding his conversation with nautical terms) to caulk here and there an indiscreet, and too obtrusive wrinkle. Here and there also a silver thread might have been detected among the wealth of jet-black hair, had not the Nènèh Wong Toewâ been anxiously watchful, and at its very first appearance plucked out the traitor. The finely formed lips also had begun to lose somewhat of their bright carnation; and the corners of the mouth were beginning to droop. But for these tokens of advancing age also, the nènèh was on the watch. For preserving the mouth she had a sourish kind of fluid prepared from the red ant which she used as "vinaigre de toilette," and for the wrinkles she had an ointment made of the fat of lizards, in which when boiling hot sundry scorpions and centipedes had met a painful death. But Nènèh Wong Toewâ was moreover an old, experienced doctoress, and she had many other wonderful secrets in her possession which she placed at the disposal of her mistress; and if the stately Laurentia still kept her lawful lord and master enthralled by her charms,—if the world around was still bound to confess that she was a fine woman,—if her waist, her shoulders, her bosom did still, in a ball-room, attract the greedy, admiring eyes of the men, and awakened envy among the ladies—then to Wong Toewâ a great share of these much coveted honours was due, and often from behind a screen the old crone would stand unobserved and enjoy the triumph of her mistress, and delight in the homage which followed her wherever she went.

Laurentia Termolen was the daughter of a former resident, and was an exceedingly handsome and agreeable girl when, at the tender age of sixteen, she became the wife of Mr. van Gulpendam who, at that time, was controller of the Home Department, and her father's right hand. Though born in India she was of European parents, both on the mother's and father's side: and she had had the advantage of an excellent education, that is to say, large sums of money had been lavishly spent upon her. She had had the very best masters in language, in music, in dancing, &c., she had even been sent to Holland to receive the finishing touches. Now, under ordinary circumstances, she might—nay she would have developed into an excellent woman; but unfortunately for her, these ordinary and favourable circumstances were wanting. For both papa and mamma were people of inordinate ambition, and had, moreover, or perhaps in consequence of that ambition, one ruling passion, the love of display. They wanted to make a great figure in their little world, and to keep up an immense amount of outward show. But all this cost money, much money, very much money, and the means whereby they sought to obtain the necessary dross, were not always such as would bear honest scrutiny. From her earliest childhood, Laurentia had heard snatches of conversation, later on she had been present at incidents, and had witnessed family quarrels, in which dishonesty and prodigality strove for the mastery. Thus her young mind had, of necessity, been poisoned, and germs of corruption had been planted within her which were sure to bring forth the most lamentable results.

If now, in Holland, she had but fallen into good hands, all this might, to a great extent at least, have been remedied, and the poisonous germs within her might perhaps have been stifled or their growth might have been checked. But hers had been the case of so many Indian-born children. She had always been looked upon as an object of financial speculation, she had always been considered as a kind of gold mine which her parents intended thoroughly to work and make the most of. Thus a mere outward veneer of good manners and a mere "jargon de bon ton" were thought amply sufficient; and of true education and moral development there had, with her, never been any question at all.

Now, had but van Gulpendam been the right man for it, he might even at the time of their marriage have made a total change in the disposition of the young girl entrusted to his care. But van Gulpendam was a man who had gone to India merely to make his fortune, and had but one object, namely, to return as soon as possible, and especially as rich as possible, to his own country. He was therefore the very last man to set an example of honesty and purity, and his intimacy with the Termolens had done nothing to counteract the evil that was in him. Money-making was his only passion, and his union with fair Laurentia had only served to make that sordid principle strike deeper roots into his heart.

After her marriage Laurentia's duty was to follow her husband, who took good care to obtain from his father-in-law none but places in the interior and most remote parts of the island. Thus he had become controller at Brandowo; after that, Assistant Resident at Bandjar Oetara; both of these places where hardly a single European could be found, and where consequently no one could watch the dodges and tricks of the official household.

How *he* had managed to be on the most excellent terms with the Regent who exacted taxes in kind, and at the same time also had the most cordial relations with the representatives of the opium farmers, who found it necessary to throw dust into the eyes of the Dutch authorities; and how *she* had lent out money to the natives on the most exorbitant interest for which she did not scruple to take, as securities, valuable articles such as jewels and heirlooms, all these dirty transactions had remained a profound secret and had not prevented van Gulpendam from rising to the position of full Resident.

This long isolation had, moreover, the most pernicious effect upon his grasping character, and upon the no less ambitious disposition of his young wife. By continual contact with none but inferiors who bowed down to them to the very ground, the bearing of Laurentia had grown to be intolerably arrogant. She had become imperious woman personified, and this grave blemish in her character was so entirely in harmony with her outward appearance, that when she had to appear in public on official occasions in the full dignity of "Resident's wife" she might have served as model for a Juno.

Such then was the mother of Anna van Gulpendam, as she suddenly stalked into the pandoppo and at the sight of Dalima straightway fired up and cried out: "So! has that slut come in again?"

"Now then," she continued in her wrath, "tell me, you young monkey, where have you been? You have been out, I'll be bound, dragging about with that lover of yours!"

"Pardon, madam!" cried the young girl. "I did not run away. I did not indeed!"

"And you did not leave master Leo running about by himself in the garden?"

"I was carried off, madam," said the young girl.

"Carried off!" cried Mrs. van Gulpendam scornfully, "by whom, pray?"

"By two strange Chinamen," replied Dalima.

"How did that come to pass?" asked her mistress.

Thereupon Dalima gave her mistress a detailed account of her forcible abduction by Ong Kwat, of which we have made mention above. We ought here to add that "sienjo Leo" just mentioned was the son of the Resident's brother, and that the boy had been staying for a considerable time at the residence, his father at that time having his home at Billiton.

"And where did they take you to?" enquired Mrs. van Gulpendam. There was in her voice some little emotion, called forth no doubt by the young girl's graphic description.

"They took me on board a big ship," said Dalima.

"Whose ship was that?"

"I don't know," replied Dalima. "I had not, however, been on board long before Lim Ho came—"

"Lim Ho," cried Mrs. van Gulpendam now thoroughly roused!—"Lim Ho, the son of the rich opium farmer!"

"That is the man," replied Dalima trembling as in utter confusion she still was crouching at the feet of her Nonna Anna.

A very peculiar smile began to play upon Mrs. van Gulpendam's lips, and a very peculiar fire began to sparkle in her eyes. "Anna," said she to her daughter, "I wish you would just go and ask your father if he would like a cup of coffee, and, if he does, get it him; will you?"

The young girl at once took the hint and disappeared.

As soon as she was gone Laurentia in feverish haste and with heaving bosom turned to Dalima and said:

"Well, what then?"

Oh! poor Dalima understood that look so well, and little as she knew of the world she knew so well why the "nonna" had been sent away. She repressed her emotion however, and calmly enough she said:

"Lim Ho went to smoke opium."

"Of course, of course," said Laurentia, huskily, "of course he went to smoke opium, before—" It is utterly impossible to convey in words any idea of the expression on the face of Laurentia van Gulpendam as she allowed the word "before" to slip from her lips. Those wildly gleaming eyes, that projecting slightly quivering jaw, those half-open lips which allowed the breath to pass with a slightly hissing sound, and that full bosom heaving convulsively under the wet kabaja—all these were the visible signs of passion raging unrestrained within. That face betrayed the whole story, aye and even betrayed her regret that van Gulpendam did not smoke opium.

"Well," she said at length, after having for a few moments stared at Dalima; "well, and what happened then?"

"Nothing happened at all," was Dalima's quiet reply.

"Nothing," cried Laurentia; "that's a lie! Lim Ho would have had you carried to his ship merely to—"

"Before he had done smoking," hastily interposed Dalima, "I was rescued."

"Rescued! rescued! By whom?"

"By Ardjan," replied the girl, trembling more violently than before.

"By Ardjan? by Ardjan?" shouted her mistress. "Oh! you filthy creature. Now I see it all. Of course you ran away from 'master Leo' to go and have a game with your Ardjan, and now you want to put it all upon Lim Ho. Wait a bit, I will—

"Gulpendam!" she shouted, "Gulpenda-a-m!" So shrill and so sharp sounded her voice as she thus called for her husband, that a couple of servants came rushing in thinking something terrible must have happened.

"Call your master!" she cried to them.

"Pardon, madam, pardon!" cried poor Dalima in wailing tones.

"No, no," said her mistress, "no pardon for a creature like you."

CHAPTER IV.

THE PLOT THICKENS.

MR. VAN GULPENDAM came rushing in.

Stately and dignified as was the "Kandjeng toean Residèn" (High and mighty Lord Resident), yet when fair Laurentia called in that tone of voice he became briskness personified. A wicked world, indeed, whispered that on such occasions he dared not for his life be one whit less nimble.

The resident was, like his fair spouse, in undress; he had on only a pair of pygamas and a "Kabaja," and in this airy costume was seated in the outer fore-gallery of the spacious residence, engaged in leisurely sipping his coffee and enjoying his morning cigar, when the voice of his wife was heard re-echoing through the house: "Gulpendam, Gulpenda-am!"

As if electrified, at the last long drawn-out syllable, van Gulpendam flew up out of his rocking-chair, and that with such violence and speed, that he drove the thing flying away several feet behind him.

"Man, the umbrella, quickly!" he roared.

Besides the habitual and constant use of nautical terms to which we have already alluded, van Gulpendam had another weakness; he would always insist upon having the emblem of his authority, the pajoeng, (umbrella) close by his side. In the very entrance of the official mansion four of these umbrellas were placed in a stand by the chair which the Lord Resident was wont to occupy. In his private office another pajoeng stood close by his writing desk; in his bedroom yet another was conspicuous at the head of the residential bed-stead. Thieves might break in during the night, such was his argument, and at the majesty of the mighty pajoeng would recoil in horror. To that argument Laurentia, imperious though she was, had had to bow, and had been forced to suffer the emblem of her lord's supremacy in the inmost sanctuary of her bed-chamber; but in the pandoppo where, in her capacity of mistress of the house, she was determined to rule supreme—no pajoeng was ever allowed to intrude. If the Resident wished to go out for a walk then it was always "Man, the umbrella!" and the umbrella and the cigar-case and the lighted slow match obediently followed his footsteps. Sometimes when the great man would cool his forehead in the breeze, the servant obsequiously carried the official gold-laced cap—reverently it was carried behind him as a priest might bear some holy relic.

As van Gulpendam made his appearance in the pandoppo he was greeted with the words, somewhat sternly uttered: "What business has that pajoeng here? You know I won't have the thing in this place." And turning very sharply upon the unhappy attendant, Laurentia cried: "Back with you, away, quick!" and a single look from the master caused the man to disappear with his umbrella faster, indeed, than he had entered.

"I say," said Mrs. van Gulpendam, addressing her husband, "Dalima has come back. I want you just to guess where that good-for-nothing creature has been to."

"What is the use of my trying to guess?" replied the husband. "She has no doubt dropped anchor somewhere in the dessa."

"In the dessa," scornfully exclaimed the lady, "oh, no doubt. Not a bit of it—she has been on the tramp with that Ardjan of her's."

"Pardon, madam!" cried the poor girl, who understood Dutch quite well enough not to lose a syllable of her mistress's words.

"And now," Laurentia went on, all in a breath, "now she has came home with quite a romantic tale. She pretends that she has been carried off, forsooth, by Lim Ho, and that she has passed the night in a ship. Just fancy that."

At the name of Lim Ho, and at the mention of the word "ship," the Resident pricked his ears. The captain of the Matamata, the guardship, had sent in a report in which he had said that the Kiem Ping Hin had been cruising about the coast. That schooner-brig belonged to the opium farmer, who was shrewdly suspected of being in close league with the opium smugglers. Hence the attention of the Resident was so suddenly arrested.

"What ship?" asked van Gulpendam, somewhat hastily.

"How should I know what ship?" replied his wife. "You had better ask that wretched girl."

"Pardon, madam!" cried Dalima, as she was still cowering in great terror on the floor of the pandoppo.

"Come, Dalima," said van Gulpendam, with some kindness in his voice, "come now, my girl, just tell us what has really happened to you."

"Allah, master, they have caught Ardjan. Have pity!"

"They have caught Ardjan, you say," interrupted van Gulpendam, "who have caught him?"

"Babah Than Khan and babah Liem King," replied the girl, weeping bitterly.

"Oh ho," muttered her master to himself, and then turning to the girl again, he said, aloud, "Where did they lay hands on him?"

"In the Moeara Tjatjing, toean," was the reply.

"In the Moeara Tjatjing," said Van Gulpendam, musingly; "what brought him there, I wonder?"

"He had just escaped with me," sobbed Dalima.

"That's it, now what did I tell you!" almost shrieked Laurentia.

"From the ship," added poor Dalima, between her sobs.

"Aye, no doubt!" cried her mistress. "Run away from this house. That is nearer the truth!"

"For goodness sake," said the Resident, apart to his wife, "let the girl get under weigh, or else we shall never get to land," and turning to Dalima, he said: "Now come, first of all, let us hear how you got on board the ship."

Thereupon, the poor girl, still seated cross-legged on the floor, began to tell her master all that had befallen her from the time of her forcible abduction out of his garden, to the moment that she had succeeded in gnawing through the ropes which bound her, and had taken to headlong flight.

Just as the girl was beginning her tale, Anna had quietly re-entered the pandoppo, and thus heard the whole story.

"Well," said the Resident, when Dalima had ended the story of her woes. "Well, that is a curious tale certainly; and now what about Ardjan—did you leave him behind you at the Moeara Tjatjing?"

"Why, sir," replied Dalima, "he could not move, he was tied hand and foot when the two Chinamen carried him off on the pole. They could not, however, have taken him very far; for scarcely had I got my feet free, before I saw their lanterns shining between the trees, and heard their voices approaching. Had it been light enough they must have seen me running away, and most probably I should never have got clear of them at all."

"Then you suppose Ardjan is still there?" asked her master, somewhat eagerly.

"That I cannot say, toean," replied Dalima. "I overheard them saying to each other that they intended first to take Ardjan to the djaga monjet, and then come back and fetch me."

"To the djaga monjet," hastily cried van Gulpendam. "Man! man!"

"If I were you," said his wife, as bitterly as she could, "I would this time leave the pajoeng behind."

But without taking the slightest notice of the amiable remark, the Resident turned to the servant, who had appeared at his call, and said: "Man, you will go at once with a couple of your mates to the Moeara Tjatjing. As you go you are to rouse the people of the neighbouring dessas, and take as many of them with you as you think you will require to help you, and then you will try and arrest Ardjan the Javanese. Baboe Dalima there will show you the way."

"Oh, you believe the girl's story then?" contemptuously asked Laurentia.

"Well, not all of it perhaps," replied her husband, "but anyhow it is of the utmost importance that the matter should be cleared up." And turning to his servant, he went on: "You carry out my orders to the letter; do you hear? And now go, and take Dalima with you."

When both had disappeared, van Gulpendam said in a whisper to his wife: "At the bottom of all this mystery, depend upon it, there is some opium-scandal. Whenever Lim Ho's name is mixed up in anything, there is something going on that must not see the light; and—if my soundings are correct—then—the rich papa will have to pay the piper."

These words the Resident accompanied with a most expressive gesture, moving his thumb and fore-finger as a man who is counting down money. Mrs. van Gulpendam tried to stop him by looking significantly at her daughter Anna.

"Oh, come, come," laughed the husband, "she is no longer a baby. When you were her age you had seen a good deal more than that at your parents'. She must by degrees get to understand where all the housekeeping-money comes from." And drawing his daughter to him, he said to her, as he patted her smooth cheek, "I am right, Anna, am I not? When by-and-bye you are married, you will like to live in a fine house like this, you will like to have your jewels like your mother, you will want fine dresses, elegant carriages, the best and most thorough-bred horses, eh?"

"Well, my dear father," replied the fair girl with a blush and a most bewitching smile, "I suppose every girl would; however, I am not particularly fond of all these things."

"Oh, no," interrupted the Resident with a laugh, "we know all about that. All girls talk just as you do when they are your age. It is always the same thing, 'Beauty when unadorned &c., &c.' But," he continued, "all that sentiment does not last very long; in time women begin to see that the vital question is to appear as beautiful as possible. And now, my girl, you run away, and go and have a look to my breakfast; I have ordered it to be laid in the verandah and I have asked my secretary van Nes to come and have it with me. You know he is a man who knows what is good—so mind you look to the honour of the galley."

When his daughter had left the pandoppo to do her father's bidding, he turned to his wife and said: "Now, my dear

Laurentia, just you listen to me. In a day or two I have to pay our bill to John Pryce of Batavia, it comes to 20,000 guilders, as you know, and of that sum I haven't got the first thousand together yet. Now, if I am right about this Lim Ho business, why then you will see, we shall have fair weather enough for our money-question; oh yes, and we shall log a good bit more than that—we shall have a nice little sum in the locker after the bill is paid—that may come in handy—what do you say, eh?"

"Of course," replied his wife thoughtfully, "but then that running away of Dalima, I don't like—"

"Now, now," cried her husband, "just you wait a bit, don't be in a hurry, don't go running off the stocks too fast! If the girl's yarn be true, then—yes—I am afraid that Lim Ho has been fishing behind the net. And yet, when I come to look at it that is not so bad for us either. It will only make him clap on more sail and—if we can only keep our helm steady, then that little job may turn out a very nice little breeze for us. A Chinaman, you know, will go far—aye he will go very far to gratify his passions. So you just let me brace up, and mind don't you go taking the wind out of my sails."

It was growing rather late in the evening—about half past seven—when the Oppas, who had been sent out, returned and reported to his master that, with Dalima's help, he had found Ardjan. The news came to Mr. van Gulpendam just after he had risen from table, and was sitting with his wife and daughter in the cool front gallery of the sumptuous Residential mansion. They were awaiting the arrival of some friends and acquaintances who were, on that evening, to partake of the family's friendly and sociable hospitality. Yes—we use the words friendly and sociable hospitality; for the van Gulpendams, with all their faults, were very hospitable, and could be most friendly and sociable. Of course their intense worldliness and love of display had a great deal to do with their hospitality; but it was so tempered by the bon-ton of both host and hostess that, on such evenings as this, their ostentation was hardly, if at all, perceptible. This was to be a friendly and sociable evening. On such evenings not every one had the entrée of the Residence; they were, in fact, quite different from the grand official receptions.

These formal receptions took place regularly, once a week, on Wednesday. Then lower officials, subaltern officers, leading men of commerce, planters, strangers, in one word mere official visitors were received. On these grand occasions the Lord Resident would appear in state, clad in light-blue cloth coat with silver buttons, in white cashmere trousers, in all the splendour, in short, which his high office could shed upon poor mortal man. Then also his handsome wife decked out in all her jewellery would flaunt about like a gorgeous peacock. But at such receptions not a gleam, not a vestige of friendliness or sociability could be discovered within the walls of the house. Then on the one side, there was nothing but pride, conceit and arrogance, and, on the other, all was humility and obsequious cringing with here and there a little touch of half-concealed mockery. But the ordinary evening gatherings were for intimate friends and highly-placed officials who, by reason of their position or wealth, could venture familiarly to approach the Residential throne. Invitations there were none; but certain dignitaries were sure to put in an appearance, such as the Commandant of the garrison who was a Colonel at least, the President of the High Court of Justice, the Chief of the Medical Staff, the President of the Local Board of Trade, and such like. All these good people came without ceremony, without compliment, stood and chatted for a moment or two with Mrs. van Gulpendam or said a few pretty things to her fair daughter, shook hands with the Resident in a friendly way, talked over the bits of news of the day and then settled down at the little card-tables for a quiet game. As a rule Mrs. van Gulpendam would take a hand, and, it must be said, that she was by no means amongst the least lucky of the players, especially when, towards the end of the evening, the play began to run rather high. Of this love of play dear little Anna used to make excellent use. As soon as she had seen the guests properly attended to, she would slip away indoors, take her seat at her piano, and there would give herself up to the full enjoyment of Chopin or Beethoven or Mozart, whose masterpieces the young girl revelled in and would study with the enthusiasm of a born musician.

Such was to be this evening's programme, though as the sequel will show, the music was to serve quite another purpose.

When the "Oppas" had, in minute detail, reported all he had learnt to know about poor Ardjan, and how he had conveyed the Javanese who was in a burning fever, to the hospital to be there further taken care of—the countenance of his chief brightened up wonderfully.

"The deuce, the deuce," he muttered between his teeth, "that bit of a joke with the devil-nettle may come to cost Lim Ho's worthy papa a pretty penny!"

From a distance Mrs. van Gulpendam was eagerly watching the emotions which were pretty clearly reflected on her husband's countenance. But the good humour of the Resident rose to absolute satisfaction when the man went on reporting to him that his people, with the assistance of the inhabitants of the dessa, had discovered certain small casks and tins carefully stowed away in the dense underwood, and which, in all probability, contained opium.

"Who, do you say, found these things?" asked the Resident.

"Oh!" said the Oppas, "all of us."

"What," fell in van Gulpendam, somewhat taken aback, "did the dessa folk see them as well as you?"

"Engèh (yes), Kandjeng toean," replied the man, who was seated cross-legged in front of his master.

The reply evidently did not please his excellency at all, and his displeasure was plainly reflected in his face.

"And where did you make this haul?" he continued. "Have you brought it along with you?"

"Pardon me, Kandjeng toean," replied the Oppas, "I had the things taken to the chief inspector of police."

"Stupid ass!" muttered van Gulpendam almost inaudibly.

"Engèh, Kandjeng toean," was the stolid reply—the man did not understand the epithet.

The word "Engèh" is always in the mouth of a Javanese whenever he addresses a European. He will give that answer even when he has not understood a word of what has been said to him, and it must not be taken to express any opinion of his own, but it is simply a meaningless and polite kind of consent to whatever his superior may choose to say to him. Van Gulpendam thoroughly knew the Javanese character, and was therefore not the least surprised at his man's answer.

"Go," said he, "to the inspector and tell him that I want him to come to me at once." The servant still retaining his posture, pushed himself backward for a few paces, then sprang up and hurried off to carry out his master's order. A few moments later, after the usual greetings and compliments had been exchanged, the conversation became general.

Anna seized this opportunity, and quietly slipped away, scarcely noticed by any one present. Dalima, she knew, had returned, and she was full of curiosity to hear what had become of Ardjan. She had managed to overhear a few scraps of her father's conversation with the "Oppas," but had not been able to get at the truth of the story. When she reached the pandoppo she found Dalima there, seated, cross-legged as usual, but with tears streaming down her cheeks.

"What in the world has happened to you, Dalima?" cried she. "Do tell us all about it."

"O Nana," cried the poor girl, "they have abused my Ardjan so shamefully!"

And thereupon she told her mistress in what a pitiable state she had found her lover. "Oh," she sobbed, "if I could have got there a little sooner!"

"But, who has treated him so dreadfully?" cried Anna full of sympathy.

"Lim Ho," replied Dalima.

"Lim Ho?" said Anna. "Why, what was he doing there?"

"That I can't tell you," replied the girl. "All I can say is that I recognised him quite plainly as he was rowed past the djaga monjet 'out of the Moeara Tjatjing.'"

"Oh, you may have been mistaken, Dalima," said her young mistress.

"Mistaken, Nana! Oh no," replied the girl. "I could see him clench his fist in anger when he caught sight of me. I feel sure, indeed, he would have put back had he dared; and the few words Ardjan could speak have made me certain it was he."

"But," asked Anna, "what could have induced him to torture the poor fellow so unmercifully with the kamadoog?"

"I am sure I don't know," said Dalima, colouring; "perhaps it was because Ardjan is my sweetheart; it may be because he rescued me from the Kiem Ping Hin. Oh, dearest Nana," continued the poor girl, with a flood of tears, "poor dear Ardjan has gone mad, he does nothing but rave."

"And where is he now?" asked Anna, striving to quiet the sobbing girl.

"He is in the hospital; the police took him there after they had gone to fetch the inspector."

"The inspector?" cried Anna. "What had he to do with it?"

"The men took some small casks and some tins which they had found, to his house," was Dalima's reply.

"Opium!" exclaimed Anna, now really frightened. "Where did they find the horrid stuff?"

"They found it close to the hut where Ardjan was tortured."

"Close to the hut, you say," cried Anna. "They found it at the same time that they discovered Ardjan?"

"Yes, Na," faltered Dalima, scarcely audibly.

For a moment the fair girl stood as if lost in thought. "I hope it will not compromise poor Ardjan," said she, musingly, and then, having collected her thoughts, she again turned to Dalima, and said:

"Were you quite alone with Ardjan when you left the ship in the djoekoeng?"

"Quite alone, Nana."

"You are sure, there was nothing in the djoekoeng when you got into her? Now think well."

"Quite sure, Nana, nothing whatever," replied Dalima. "How could there be? We slid along a bit of rope into the boat, while the storm was howling all round us, and glad enough we were to get out of the ship and away from her as soon as possible."

Nonna Anna reflected for a few moments. Then she started as if a sudden thought had struck her, ran into her own room, which adjoined the pandoppo, and soon returned carrying with her a writing case. She put it down before one of the lamps which were burning there, and hurriedly scribbled a little note. When she had sealed it, she handed it to the maid, and said:

"Now, Dalima, listen to me. Do you really love Ardjan, and are you anxious to save him?"

"Oh, Nana," cried the poor girl, ready again to burst into tears; "how can you ask that?"

"Very well," said Anna, quietly, "then take this note to Mr. van Nerekool, you understand?"

"Oh yes, I know," cried the girl; "he lives in Aboe Street close by the Catholic Church. But it is so far away, and it is now so late."

"Then you had better tell Sodikromo, the gardener's boy, to go with you," said Anna. "You can take a 'sâdos' (dos-à-dos) and you will soon be there and back—So now quick—make haste."

It did not take Sodikromo long to get the vehicle ready, and soon he and Dalima were on their way with the nonna's message.

While this was going on in the pandoppo, Mr. and Mrs. van Gulpendam were receiving their guests, who kept on gradually arriving, with the courtesy and suavity they could so well put on.

"Well, that is kind of you, colonel, I call it really very kind of you to remain faithful to our little party," said Laurentia to a gentleman who had just come in. He was in plain clothes; but his bearing and his white hair closely clipped and his bristling moustache plainly proclaimed him a soldier.

"And why, madam," replied he, "what may have led you to suppose that I would have denied myself the pleasure of presenting myself here to-night?"

"Van Gulpendam has told me," replied the hostess, "that there has been very ugly news from Atjeh, and that a considerable part of our garrison would have to leave. So I took it for granted that you would be much too busy to—"

"Do what, madam?" said the colonel, smiling.

"To come and take my hand here as usual?"

"By no means, I can assure you that a good deal would have to happen before I would forego the pleasure of your charming society. Oh, no," he continued, "I have given my orders—the rest, the chief of my staff will see to."

"And you," said Laurentia, turning to another of her newly-arrived guests, "have not these sad tidings given you a great deal to do? A very large medical staff will have to accompany the expedition—at least, as member of the Red Cross I have received some such intimation from Batavia."

"No, madam," replied the gentleman thus addressed, who was chief medical officer at Santjoemeh. "I have not to complain of overwork. Every provision for our expedition to Atjeh has been made and I need not trouble my head about it any more. But, for all that, I can assure you that I was in real danger of being obliged to miss your pleasant party this evening."

"Indeed," said Laurentia, with much assumed interest, "I hope there is no case of serious illness among our friends, doctor?"

"I am glad to say there is not, madam," replied the doctor. "But, as I was at my dinner this afternoon, the young surgeon on duty at the hospital came running in to tell me that I was urgently wanted. A young native, he said, had been brought in by the police, who was in a most dreadful condition, suffering from something which completely puzzled him. His diagnostica was altogether at fault."

"His—what was at fault, did you say, doctor?" enquired Mrs van Gulpendam, "His diagnostica, madam," replied the surgeon. "That is the name, you know, we give to the science by which we recognize a special form of disease. Well, as the young fellow assured me that the patient was in an extremely critical state—in fact *in extremis*—I had no choice but to go and see him. You know, dear madam," proceeded the surgeon, sententiously, "a physician's devotion must be that of a priest."

"Oh, I know, of course," replied Laurentia, with a slight smile; "but pray go on."

' Well," continued the surgeon, "I went all the way to the hospital. And now, just guess what was the matter!—Oh, those young doctors of the new school! The fellow had his mouth full of fine words—of absent diaeresis, of efflorescentia, of formicatio, of hemianthropia, and what not. But he couldn't see with all his brand new science, that he had to do with a very simple—though I must own—a most severe case of urtication."

"A severe case of what?" enquired Laurentia.

"Why, madam, of urtication," replied the doctor, "the man had undergone, somehow or other, a most severe flogging with nettle-leaves."

"Nettle-leaves!" exclaimed van Gulpendam, breaking into the conversation, his interest being thoroughly aroused at the doctor's words. "These things," he continued, "are called in Javanese, I think, Kamadoog—are they not, doctor?"

"Precisely so, Resident, you are quite right," was the surgeon's reply.

"Pray, doctor, do go on with your story," said van Gulpendam. "Ten knots an hour if you please."

"Well," said the doctor, "that foolish young fellow might have let me finish my dinner in peace. There was nothing to be done in the case but what the people of the dessa had done already, the parts most afflicted had to be covered with sirih-chalk and the other parts with oil. It was very simple. The man was, of course, in a burning fever, but I need not have been disturbed for that, there are antifebrilia and antidinika in abundance in store, he might have administered them without calling me in."

"And how long," asked van Gulpendam, somewhat eagerly, "do the effects of such an urtication, as you call it, last?"

"Oh, that is impossible to say, that depends entirely upon how the nettle has been applied. This patient of ours has had an uncommonly heavy dose of it, and, in my opinion, the fever will last some forty-eight hours. Then, I hope, it will abate, but it will be quite a fortnight before the man is on his legs again."

"A fortnight," said van Gulpendam, with a frown. "Why, that is a long time."

"Yes," said the surgeon, "it will be quite a fortnight, and then only if all goes well."

"And tell me," continued the Resident, "will it leave any serious consequences?"

"None whatever, my dear sir. If the patient once gets well over the fever, there will be none."

"But surely," insisted van Gulpendam, "there will be scars and the skin will be discoloured."

"Certainly not—nothing of the kind," replied the other.

"So that," continued the Resident, "after the cure there will be no visible proofs of the treatment he has received?"

"There will be none. But, Resident, why all these questions? Perhaps you take some special interest in the man?"

"Not I," said van Gulpendam, carelessly, but yet with some confusion. "Why should I? I know nothing about the case, I have heard nothing about it; but I have heard so much of the terrible effects of the Hoekoem Kamadoog that I often have wished to learn something more about it."

Other guests were arriving, and so the conversation dropped. After the usual greetings the card-tables were occupied, while Anna was busying herself at the tea-table. Play had, however, scarcely begun before the chief inspector of police was announced. He paid his respects to the lady of the house, interchanged a few words with some of his acquaintance, and then turning to the Resident he said: "I beg your pardon, sir, for thus disturbing you; but the message I received, left me no choice but to intrude myself upon you at once."

"Quite right, quite right, Mr. Meidema," said the host, as he rose from his seat and turning to his partners he said: "Gentlemen, you must oblige me by playing a three-handed game for a few minutes, I have urgent business with Mr. Meidema."

The two officials entered a side-chamber which opened upon the gallery, and after having carefully shut the door, Mr. van Gulpendam, without preface whatever, said to the inspector:

"Mr. Meidema, you have made a considerable capture of opium to-day, I hear."

"Yes, Resident," was the reply, "three buttertubs full, and fifteen tins have been delivered into my custody. In the tubs the opium was packed just like butter, one little tub of ten kilos, inside a larger one, and surrounded by coarse salt. The tins contain about five kilos each. The whole amounts to about one and a half 'pikols.'"

"So, so," said van Gulpendam, "that is a pretty good haul."

"Which are worth," continued Meidema, "I should say, about nine thousand guilders."

"How do you make that out?" asked the Resident. "You know Government delivers the raw opium to the farmers at the rate of 30 guilders the kattie. Now, 30 × 150, is, according to my reckoning, no more than four thousand five hundred guilders. I am right, am I not?"

"You are perfectly right, sir," replied Meidema. "But you must remember that this is not raw material. We have got hold of tjandoe, and you know, I suppose, that one kattie of raw opium gives only fifteen thirty second parts of pure tjandoe."

"I daresay you are right," said the other. "But," he added, fixing a very strange look upon his inspector, "are you quite sure it is opium?"

Without appearing to notice his superior officer's look, Meidema answered at once: "It is something better than that, sir, it is tjandoe. Look at the sample, I have one here with me. It is the purest Bengal article."

"Hadn't we better," said van Gulpendam, "submit that sample to a chemist for analysis?"

"Just as you please," said Meidema; "but I see not the slightest need for that. It is tjandoe, and it contains, at least, twenty or thirty per cent of morphia."

"Indeed," quoth van Gulpendam. "I was only thinking—Well, it is your business, you know what is best. The contraband has been placed in your custody. You know, I suppose, where it came from?"

"Oh yes, sir, I know where it came from. Your chief servant told me that it was put on shore from the Kiem Ping Hin, and you know—"

"From the Kiem Ping Hin," hastily exclaimed van Gulpendam. "What makes you think that?"

"What makes me think that?" slowly repeated Meidema. "Why, Resident, I told you just now your chief servant told me so."

"Man, man," cried the Resident, in a loud voice.

The servant thus summoned appeared; and then turning to Mr. Meidema and pointing to the Javanese, the Resident said: "Is that the man who told you this?"

"Yes, sir," said Meidema, "that is the man."

"Man," said the Resident, as he sternly fixed his eye upon his Javanese servant, "that opium which you delivered to the toean Inspector, was found upon Ardjan—was it not?"

"Engèh, Kandjeng toean," was the man's reply. "But"—

"I will have no 'but's,'" cried van Gulpendam, "simply yes or no."

"Engèh, Kandjeng toean," said the man again stolidly.

"You hear it, Mr. Meidema?"

"Oh yes, Resident, I hear it," replied the inspector, in a strange tone of voice.

"Very well, then," continued his superior officer, "you will please to draw up your official report in accordance with that man's evidence."

"But, sir—" began the other.

"I will have no 'buts,'" interrupted van Gulpendam, sharply. "All you have to do is to do your duty."

"Have you any other commands for me, Resident?" drily asked the inspector, with a stiff bow.

"No, thank you—none at present."

A few moments later the card parties were in full swing, and Laurentia, who was holding splendid hands, was in unusually high spirits, and exceedingly talkative.

"Humph," muttered her husband, as he took his seat at his own table. "She is beginning rather early—rather too early I am afraid."

CHAPTER V.

MUSIC HATH CHARMS.

JUST as Mr. Meidema was leaving the Residence in his brougham, another carriage drove up and Mr. van Nerekool walked up the steps which gave access to the gallery in which the company was assembled.

It may have struck the reader as somewhat strange that so young, so well-educated and so refined a girl as Anna van Gulpendam assuredly was, should have ventured to write to the young lawyer, and strange also that the latter should so speedily have answered her summons in person. But, in the first place, it is well to remember that, when she wrote that letter Anna, completely carried away by the sore distress of Dalima, and, in the kindness of her heart, most anxious to do what she could for her favourite servant, acted purely upon impulse; and had not stopped to consider that perhaps her action might be looked upon as somewhat forward and indelicate. Further it must be said, that although never a word of love had passed between them, yet they were united in the very strongest bond of sympathy—such sympathy as always will draw together true and noble natures whenever they happen to meet. As they were themselves perfectly honest and guileless; no paltry suspicions could possibly arise on either side. That this strong bond of sympathy did exist between Anna van Gulpendam and young Mr. van Nerekool, cannot be denied; but for the present at least, there was no more than this. Whether or not that bond would ever be drawn closer and give place to more intimate and tender relations the sequel will show.

"Good evening, madam," said van Nerekool as he made his bow to the hostess, "I hope I have the pleasure of finding you well."

"There's that fool again! What has that booby come on board for I wonder?" grumbled van Gulpendam, while fair Laurentia answered the young man's greeting as amiably as possible.

"Well, Mr. van Nerekool, this is indeed kind of you," said she. "We are glad to see you! You do not wear out your welcome. We only too seldom have the pleasure of seeing you!"

"Very good indeed of you to say so, Mrs. van Gulpendam; but, you know, I don't much care for cards and, in the presence of such an adept as you are, I cannot help feeling myself, to say the least, somewhat of a *fâcheux troisième.*" As he was speaking his eye at a glance took in the whole company but failed to light on her whom it sought. So turning to the gentlemen he said: "Well, Resident, I need not enquire after you, nor after your health, colonel, nor yours, my dear doctor; anyone can see there is not much the matter with you. How are the cards serving you this evening? I hope you are in luck," continued he to the secretary seated at the other table.

"Not over well," muttered van Nes. "I was getting on pretty fairly just at first but—"

"Ah, Mr. van Nerekool," cried Mrs. van Gulpendam in the best of spirits; "you should have come a few minutes earlier, you should have seen my last hand. Why I held—"

"Will Mr. van Nerekool take tea or coffee?" said a silvery voice interrupting the threatened explanation.

The young man turned at once. "Good evening, Miss Anna," said he most heartily. "How are you? But I need not ask, you look like a fresh-blown Devonshire rose, so charming, so—"

"Will you take tea or coffee?" said Anna, demurely, with an arch smile at the young man's compliments.

"Did you make the coffee yourself, Miss Anna?"

"Oh, no," replied the still smiling girl, "our cook always makes it."

"And the tea?" asked van Nerekool also with a smile.

"Yes, that is my department, Mr. van Nerekool."

"I will take a cup of tea if you please."

"Our cook makes most excellent coffee, I assure you," cried Mrs. van Gulpendam.

"I don't doubt it," replied the young man, with a slight bow. "I do not for a moment question her talent, madam; but, if you will allow me, I prefer a cup of tea. It reminds one of home, you know. If you please, Miss Anna, may I ask you for a cup of tea?"

"On one condition," said the young girl, playfully.

"It is granted at once," replied the young man. "Now, what is it?"

"That you will presently accompany me in 'Fleurs d'oranger.' You know Ludovic's charming duet, do you not?"

Van Nerekool made a wry face and slightly raised his hands in a deprecating manner.

"Oh," continued the young girl, laughing. "You may look as solemn as a judge on the bench; but I won't let you off. The 'Fleurs d'oranger' or no tea—there you have my ultimatum. My ultimatum, that is what they call the last word before a declaration of war, don't they, colonel?"

"Quite right, Miss Anna," said the old soldier, who, wholly engrossed in his cards, had heard nothing but the last words of the question.

"An ultimatum," cried van Nerekool, "a declaration of war? Who would be so mad as to declare war against you?

No, no; sooner than be suspected of that I would play 'Fleurs d'oranger' the whole evening!"

"There you go to the other extreme," laughed Anna, "that is always the way with you lawyers, at least papa says so; you are always finding paragons of perfection or else monsters of iniquity."

"No, no, we are not so bad as all that, Miss Anna!" said van Nerekool. "But will you allow me for a few moments to watch your mother's play and take a lesson from her?"

"Do so, by all means," said Anna, "meanwhile I must go and pour out the tea and see to the other refreshments, and when I have done I mean to play a sonata of Beethoven."

"Beethoven!" cried van Nerekool, "most delightful, Miss Anna, do let me beg of you to give us the second sonata in D dur Op 36."

"What tyrants you gentlemen are," replied the young girl. "Very well, you shall have your sonata, but, after that, remember, 'Fleurs d'oranger.' Now go and take your lesson."

The young lawyer went and took a seat behind Mrs. van Gulpendam's chair, and, although he did not pretend to any great knowledge of cards, yet he could not help admiring that lady's fine and close play, while Anna did the honours of the tea-table, and was busily tripping about to see that the servants did not neglect their duties, and that the guests were properly attended to.

As he was seated there behind fair Laurentia, and was attentively studying her cards, the glow of light which numerous splendid chandeliers shed over the entire gallery, finely brought out his clearly cut profile.

Charles van Nerekool was a man of five or six and twenty years of age. After he had most honourably completed his studies at the university of Leyden, he had been appointed junior member of the Court of Justice at Santjoemeh when, a few months back, he had arrived from Holland.

He was a tall, fair-haired man, scrupulously neat in his attire, and most careful of his personal appearance. His fine, sharply chiselled features had not yet lost their European freshness and bloom, and were well set off by a thick curly beard and moustache, some shades lighter than his hair. His winning manners, which were those of a courteous and highly-bred gentleman, perfectly harmonized with his handsome countenance, and he was universally esteemed an accomplished and most agreeable companion. But, though society had justly formed a high opinion of him, there was one point in his character which would not allow him ever to become a popular man. He was a lawyer in the truest and noblest sense of the word. A man who, deeply versed in the law, yet would tolerate nothing that was not strictly just and upright. Quibbling and casuistry had no attractions for him; he was, in fact, honest as gold and true as a diamond.

Hence his manner of speech was always frank and straightforward—oftentimes he was too plain spoken, for he would not and could not condescend to wrap up his real sentiments in fine words or ambiguous phrases. Anyone therefore, who has the slightest knowledge of the present state of society, may readily understand why the number of his real friends was but small. A strict sense of justice, a noble frankness of expression, and an intense love of truth, for truth's sake, are, unfortunately, not the qualities which serve to push a man forward most quickly in the official world—at least not in the official world of India. Van Gulpendam, especially—though he could not close his doors to a man in van Nerekool's position, heartily detested him, and had repeatedly expressed his dislike to the old judge who presided over the Council at Santjoemeh.

"Ah well!" this latter had, on one occasion, said to him, "you are rather too hard upon our young colleague. Remember this Mr. van Nerekool is but a newly fledged chicken. You will see when he has been here a year or two he will turn out a very useful fellow indeed. Why, every one of us had, at his age, just those fine idealistic views of life which he now holds."

This answer made our worthy friend, van Gulpendam, look rather queer. *His* conscience, at any rate, did not accuse him of fine principles and idealistic views,—not such views, at least, as those for which he found fault with van Nerekool.

The young man was still seated behind Laurentia's chair, attentively keeping his eye on her cards.

"I cannot say," said the lady with a forced smile, "that you improve my luck. Since you have been sitting there I have scarcely picked up a card worth looking at. I wish you would go and have a look at the Resident's hand.—"

"Thank you," cried her husband, "much obliged, you want to give me a spell of bad fortune."

There are no more superstitious people in the world than your veteran card-players.

At Mrs. van Gulpendam's not very reasonable or very courteous remark, van Nerekool had of course risen, and the Resident's exclamation made him feel rather awkward; he did not, in fact, very well know what to do, when the young lady of the house came to the rescue.

"Now Mr. van Nerekool," said she, "my 'Fleurs d'oranger!' what has become of them? It is time to begin, I think."

"And my sonata in D dur," replied the young man, "what has become of it? I have not heard a single note of it yet."

"True," she said, "I had quite forgotten it; come and turn over the music for me."

"Yes, that's right," said fair Laurentia, "you go and turn over the music," and for an instant she looked at the young people as they retired together and then fixed her eyes once again upon her cards.

"Now, you see," continued she, "what did I tell you, no sooner has he turned his back than I get quite different cards!"

"Oh," muttered van Gulpendam from his table, "I can't bear to have a fellow prying into my hand. If he does not wish to play what does the booby want to come here for at all, I wonder?"

"H'm," said the old colonel, "perhaps he is anxious to learn."

"To learn," contemptuously echoed van Gulpendam, "he will never be any good at cards, he is not practical enough for that!"

"I quite agree with you, Resident," said the judge somewhat drily, "a man who is not of a practical turn of mind will never make much of a hand at cards."

"No, nor at anything else either," grumbled van Gulpendam; "come, let us go on with the game. It is my lead. Hearts, I say."

The two young people had entered the inner gallery and were no sooner out of sight of the company, before van Nerekool began:

"I have received your note, Miss Anna, and, as you see, I have hastened to obey your summons."

"For goodness sake speak lower," whispered she. And then in her usual tone of voice she continued: "Just help me, please, to find the music."

Whilst they were engaged in taking the pieces one by one out of a curiously carved étagère which stood by the piano and examining them, the young girl said in a whisper: "Yesterday our baboe Dalima was forcibly carried away out of the garden— Hush! do not interrupt me or I shall not have time to tell you all. The author of the outrage is Lim Ho. She has, however, been most providentially rescued by Ardjan, the man to whom she is engaged to be married. Thereupon Lim Ho has had him most fearfully tortured with Kamadoog leaves —so dreadfully that he is now in the hospital—"

"Look here, Miss Anna, I have found your 'Fleurs d'oranger,'" said van Nerekool aloud as he heard some one moving outside.

"Yes, thank you," replied Anna. "But what can have become of that sonata? Here it is," she continued in the same tone of voice, "I have it; but pray, Mr. van Nerekool, put that heavy pile of music on the piano."

"Oh," said he, "you intend to give us the sonata before the waltz?"

"Yes," said Anna, "that is best I think;" and then she continued softly, "I know that sonata so perfectly that I can go on talking while I am playing it by heart."

She sat down to the instrument, van Nerekool standing close by her side ready to turn over the leaves for her.

Anna struck the first notes of Beethoven's magnificent work while she continued: "As I was telling you, Ardjan had to be taken to the hospital in consequence of the brutal treatment he had received. But that is not what made me write to you."

"What was it then?" whispered van Nerekool eagerly. "I am all ears, Miss Anna."

"Well then," said she, "pay attention to me."

And while the nimble fingers of the talented girl ran over the keys, while she rendered in most masterly style the lovely reveries of the inspired musician—strains which full of sweetness yet here and there seem clouded by the great gloom which was impending over the author's future life—she told the young man the whole story of Dalima's abduction, of her rescue by Ardjan, in what wretched plight the poor Javanese had been found, and she told him also that close by the place where they found him a considerable quantity of smuggled opium had been discovered, and had been delivered into the custody of the chief inspector of police.

Van Nerekool had not for a single instant turned his eye from the music, he had never once made a mistake in turning over the pages; but yet he had been listening so attentively that not a single word had escaped his ears. At the ill-omened word opium his countenance fell. The young girl noticed the change of expression though she did not allow her emotion to influence her play. Indeed she executed the final movement of the sonata—that brilliant movement in which a very flood of fancies all seem to unite in conveying the idea of perfect bliss—in so faultless and spirited a manner, that the card-players in the outer gallery, pausing for a few moments in their game to listen, broke out in a loud chorus of applause.

"But do you know for certain, Miss Anna," said van Nerekool, under cover of the noise, "that it was opium?"

"How should I know?" replied she before the clamour had subsided.

"But was that opium brought ashore by Ardjan and Dalima?"

"Most certainly not," said she in a whisper, "there was nothing of the kind in the djoekoeng in which they came to land."

"How then did the stuff get there?" asked van Nerekool.

"Dalima could tell me nothing about it," continued the young girl. "And now," she went on in her usual tone of voice, "now for the 'Fleurs d'oranger!'"

"But," insisted van Nerekool in a scarcely audible whisper, "what makes you fear that Ardjan will be suspected? As far as I can see there is not a shadow of a suspicion against him, unless—"

"Hush!" said Anna, "presently—"

And then, as a pleasant sequel to Beethoven's sublime melody, the sparkling notes of the delightful waltz were heard filling both galleries with gay and pleasant music.

While the last chords were still re-echoing, the young girl answered van Nerekool's question: "Just now," said she, "Mr. Meidema was with my father and—" dear little Anna paused and hesitated.

"And?" said van Nerekool. "Come, Miss Anna, you must tell me all."

"I overheard part of their conversation—"

"Oh," said he, "you listened just a little bit?"

The poor girl blushed deeply, face, neck and ears were covered with the glow. "Well yes," said she resolutely, "I did listen. I had heard my father ordering the Oppas to go and fetch Mr. Meidema and somehow I could not get rid of the suspicion that it had something to do with Ardjan. When the inspector called I got behind the screen which masks the door and —"

"Well, yes, Miss Anna, go on, you must tell me all."

"And then I heard all they said," continued she.

"What did you hear?" asked the young man, eagerly.

"All they said," she replied.

"Yes; but," continued he, "what did they talk about?"

"Oh! Mr. van Nerekool," said Anna, "I really cannot tell you all that passed."

"Perhaps not; but yet you can remember the gist of their words. Do try, Miss Anna."

"Mr. van Nerekool," said she; "I am not at all sure that I have a right to—"

"But my dear Miss Anna, why then did you send for me? Just ask yourself that question?"

"Oh!" sighed Anna, "I was so over-anxious to save Dalima's lover."

"Just so," replied he; "I can quite understand that; but in what way can I possibly serve you unless you will trust me with all that took place? As far as I can see at present, there seems not the remotest reason why Ardjan should be accused of this smuggling business. Do pray trust me, Miss Anna!"

"Oh! how I wish I could!" sighed the poor girl again. "How I wish I could; but it is so very hard."

"What is your difficulty?" insisted the young man.

"That conversation between my father and Mr. Meidema," replied she.

"But come," she continued; "you are right; you must know everything or nothing. I will tell you all."

Thereupon, burning with shame, the young girl repeated just what had passed between the two officials. She concealed nothing—neither the supposed value of the smuggled wares, nor Meidema's suspicions as to their source, nor the examination of the chief servant. But when she came to reveal the fact that her father had, in a manner, forced the policeman to accuse Ardjan, the poor girl almost broke down.

Van Nerekool understood her confusion but too well, he knew enough and felt too deeply how humiliating was her position to wish to prolong the conversation. But before dismissing the subject he said:

"Just now you told me that Mr. Meidema had mentioned the name of the ship from whence he suspected the opium to have been brought. Do you happen to remember it?"

"Yes," said Anna; "I believe it was Hing Kim Lin, or Lin King Him, or something of that kind."

"Was it perhaps Kiem Ping Hin?" asked the lawyer, in a very grave voice. "Now think well before you answer."

"Yes, Mr. van Nerekool," she cried still in the same subdued tones, "that was the name."

The young man could not suppress a sigh as he looked down sadly at the fair girl beside him.

"Why do you look so strangely at me?" asked Anna in some alarm.

"Do you know to whom this Kiem Ping Hin belongs?" he asked.

"No," said she; "how should I?"

"Well, then, the Kiem Ping Hin belongs to Lim Ho."

"To Lim Ho? what, to the son of the opium farmer?" cried the girl, covering her face with her hands as if she were trying to hide herself.

"That is the man," replied van Nerekool, as he looked down anxiously at her.

Then Anna remembered the infamous dialogue between her parents at which that morning she had been present. The hot tears of shame came rushing into her eyes, forced their way through her closed fingers and went trickling down her shapely hands as she sobbed out:

"Oh, my God! my God!"

"Miss Anna, dear Miss Anna," said van Nerekool, deeply moved at the sight of her grief; "do be calm; pray, do not despair. I will do all I possibly can to save that unfortunate man. I promise you that solemnly."

"But, my father," cried Anna, as she hurriedly with her handkerchief tried to wipe away the tears which were still flowing fast. "But, my father?"

"Not a word of all this to him."

"Oh! no; Mr. van Nerekool," said she, "I do not mean that; but will this wretched business compromise him in anyway?"

"Not if I can help it," replied he; "I shall do my best to arrange matters so as to leave him out of the question altogether. Trust me."

"Thank you, thank you," said Anna. "Now let us say no more. I will go in and try to hide my feelings; you had better remain at the piano for awhile."

"Yes," said he, "I shall go on playing something or other and then I will take my leave."

In a quarter of an hour or so, van Nerekool was again standing behind the card-players. The game was nearly over, they were just having the last round and soon the company began to break up.

"Really, Mrs. van Gulpendam has too much luck," said the old colonel, as he sat ruefully looking at the few scattered counters he had before him.

Presently all had taken their leave and the Resident was standing looking out at the departing guests when he heard a subdued voice saying behind him:

"May I be allowed to say something, Kandjeng toean?"

Van Gulpendam turned and saw his chief servant seated cross-legged beside him.

"What have you got to tell me?" asked he, abruptly.

"I made a mistake just now, Kandjeng toean," was the man's reply.

"A mistake," said the Resident; "what do you mean?"

"When I told the inspector toean that the opium was found on Ardjan."

"Brute!" roared van Gulpendam. "If you dare to retract your words I give you the sack—I shall have you clapped into prison. Do you hear me?"

"Engèh, Kandjeng toean," said the poor native with his usual drawl, and placing his folded hands upon his forehead he respectfully and submissively made his "sembah" (salaam).

CHAPTER VI.

A LUCKY DAY.

VAN NEREKOOL'S interference was destined to bear very little fruit; but, on the other hand, it involved him in the most serious troubles. He was so young, he was so utterly without experience of all the complicated mazes of injustice which, in Dutch India, are found in both the judicial and administrative departments as soon as ever these are brought into contact with anything that touches the great Opium monopoly.

A few weeks after his conversation with Anna van Gulpendam, she told him, on the occasion of another visit which he paid to her family, that Ardjan had been discharged from the hospital, but only to be immediately committed to jail. Thereupon, van Nerekool began to make inquiries from the President of the Council at Santjoemeh, and from him he heard that the Javanese was lying in prison on an accusation of smuggling opium in considerable quantities.

"But," added the President, Mr. Zuidhoorn, "there is, in this case, one very curious feature, which I do not at all understand."

"Indeed," said van Nerekool, "what may that be?"

"Why, it is this," said Mr. Zuidhoorn. "Last week I received a letter from the Resident, in which he tells me in what order and on what dates he wants us to take the cases we have before us."

"Why," cried van Nerekool, "he has no right whatever to do that—such dictation is perfectly illegal—it is directly contrary to the law!"

"Precisely so," continued Zuidhoorn. "And, as you may suppose, I have flatly refused to obey his directions. But listen further. On that list of his, Ardjan's trial is put the very last of all. Can you make that out?"

"Well," said van Nerekool, "I daresay it is because he has no proofs against the man. In fact, I feel persuaded that it is a mere trumped up case, and knowing that it is so, he wishes to keep the man as long as possible in custody, so that when ultimately he is acquitted, he may have the satisfaction of saying: the fellow has been so many months locked up for my pleasure."

Mr. Zuidhoorn cast a sharp look at his young colleague. "It may be so," said he, after a pause, "however, that is not the view I take of the matter."

"Indeed," said the other, "what, then, is your opinion?"

"Well," said Mr. Zuidhoorn, "you know, I suppose, that I have applied for leave of absence on account of my health, and that I am going to Holland?"

"I have heard so," replied the young man; "but what of that?"

"What of that?" repeated the President. "Don't you see! If the cases should be taken in the order van Gulpendam directs, why then, we have so many of them that Ardjan cannot possibly be tried before six or eight weeks."

"Certainly, I see that," said van Nerekool; "but—"

"You see," continued the President, "by that time I shall be far enough away."

"Quite so," rejoined the other; "but what does that matter? I suppose some other judge will be appointed in your place to preside at Santjoemeh, while you are absent."

A bitter smile curled the lip of Mr. Zuidhoorn. "Who knows?" said he, "where that substitute may have to come from. Travelling in India is a slow business. If, for instance, Mr. Raabtoon were called from Padang, or Mr. Nellens had to come from Makassar, why, there are two months gone before either of them can be properly installed, and meanwhile—"

"Meanwhile," interrupted van Nerekool, "they may appoint some other member of the court for the time being, to get through the unfinished cases."

"Yes," replied Mr. Zuidhoorn. "They could do that no doubt; but they will not. You know well enough that in case of absence on leave, the Resident has the power himself to preside at the Council."

"Yes," said van Nerekool; "what if he did?"

"If he did," continued Mr. Zuidhoorn, "it is obvious enough what would happen. As soon as I am gone, the Resident will take Ardjan's case himself."

"But, my dear sir," said van Nerekool, "why should he do such a thing?"

"How can I tell why?" replied the other. "You recollect how, some time ago, a colonial minister wrote to the king and drew his majesty's attention to the fact that officials are systematically bribed by the opium farmers, and that thus the authority of those who have to carry out the laws is undermined, seeing that they are wholly under the influence of the Chinese opium farmers and smugglers. Look you, my dear sir, I have much more experience in these matters than you can have, and when I come to consider the evident anxiety there seems to exist at headquarters, to have this case of Ardjan's put off to the last, then I cannot but suspect that an attempt is being made to get the case out of the hands of the unprejudiced and competent judge."

"But," exclaimed van Nerekool, indignantly, "that is most monstrous, it is infamous."

"No doubt it is," quietly said the President.

"And what course have you taken?" asked van Nerekool.

"I have taken the only course I could take," replied Mr.

Zuidhoorn. "I have simply done my duty. I have already told you that I have flatly refused to put off the case. It will, therefore, come before us in its proper turn, that is to say, about Tuesday fortnight."

It was not, however, to be so.

A few days before the above conversation took place between the legal officials, the Resident, Mr. van Gulpendam, received an unexpected visit.

Yes, the visit was a wholly unexpected one, for it was Sunday, and about two o'clock in the afternoon, at a time when, of all others, no man in Dutch India looks to be disturbed. About eleven o'clock that same morning, Mr. van Gulpendam had gone to his club, and had amused himself with a game or two at billiards. He liked to show his subordinates that, though he had not cruised about Delft or Leyden, he yet was just as handy as they were at cutting a ball into the middle pocket, and had not forgotten how to put on side. About one o'clock, he had gone home, had made an excellent and hearty luncheon, and then, in the pleasing consciousness of being able to enjoy the Lord's Day undisturbed, had put on his pyjamas and kabaai, and was just preparing to turn in for his afternoon nap. His hand was already on the handle of his bedroom door, when lo, his chief servant appeared in his usual quiet, stealthy way, slid down to the ground, made a most respectful "sembah," and softly whispered that Babah Lim Yang Bing requested the honour of a few moments' interview with the Kandjeng toean.

"Babah Lim Yang Bing," exclaimed van Gulpendam, in surprise. "What? the Opium farmer?"

"Engèh, Kandjeng toean."

"Show him in at once," ordered the master.

"But, van Gulpendam," said his wife, "what are you thinking about? In that costume?"

"It does not matter, my dear," replied the husband, "we must sail when the wind blows fair. But—oh yes—" and, calling another attendant, he ordered, "Go and fetch the pajoeng stand here."

Laurentia shrugged her shoulders. "There's a pretty thing, the Resident in pyjamas and kabaai, and the golden pajoeng by his side."

"It looks more dignified, my dear. You leave me to manage, we are having a fair breeze, I tell you. Now you run away to your nest."

"Humph," muttered Laurentia, with her most captivating smile. "Very sociable, I must say, all alone. Come, my dear," she continued, "do send that Chinaman about his business."

"Not a bit of it," said van Gulpendam, "we must keep the galley fire in—you seem to forget our bill to John Pryce."

But the lady had vanished. One of her female attendants had come in and whispered to her mistress that M'Bok Kârijâh was in the kitchen waiting to see her.

This M'Bok Kârijâh was a friend of Nènèh Wong Toewâ and pretty nearly as old as she was; but she had more strings to her bow than Mrs. van Gulpendam's confidante, for besides being a doekoen, she was also a bepôrrô, a dealer in jewellery.

"Much use her coming now," muttered the lady, "now that my husband has this Chinaman on his hands."

She hastened however to her room, and ordered her servant to show the old woman up.

At the entrance of the pandoppo the Chinaman and the old crone met. Neither, however, seemed to have the slightest knowledge of the other; but a smile played upon the lips of the babah. For anyone but M'Bok Kârijâh that smile was no more than the stereotyped smirk which the sallow face of every Celestial wears when he is about to enter the presence of a superior. The old woman, however, knew that it was a smile of inward satisfaction. Preceded by the servant girl she entered the inner gallery and was admitted into the njonja's bedchamber, while the Chinaman approached the Resident who sat comfortably balancing himself in his rocking-chair by the side of which was displayed the pajoeng stand which surrounded the high and mighty lord with its lustre of umbrellas.

"Well, babah," began van Gulpendam as with a careless gesture he motioned the Chinaman to a seat, "Well, babah, what brings you here this hot time of day?"

The Chinaman took a chair without ceremony, and with a sly look he said airily, "Oh I merely came to inquire after the health of the Kandjeng toean."

"The deuce you have, babah, I must say you might have chosen some other time for that."

"Oh, pray don't say so, Kandjeng toean. Really this is the very best time for a little quiet chat. Body and mind are now both at rest, and this is the very moment for a little business."

"Oh so," said van Gulpendam, with a laugh, "the babah has come on business, has he?"

"That is why," said the Chinaman lowering his voice, "I was so anxious that no one should see me slipping into the garden of the Residence."

Van Gulpendam pricked his ears.

"You are very mysterious, babah," said he, "have you come to bother me again about that confounded opium?"

"Yes, Kandjeng toean, and for something else besides."

"Very well, babah, let us hear what you have to say." He had it on the tip of his tongue to call out, "Very well, babah, haul away," and, had he at the moment known how to get it out in Malay, out it would have come. But he had time to reflect that the Chinaman would not, in any case, have appreciated the force of the nautical phrase.

Babah Lim Yang Bing, then, in his oily fashion proceeded to give his version of the seizure of opium near the djaga monjet in the Moeara Tjatjing, and made some attempt to explain to the Resident that what had been seized there was in reality no opium at all.

"Oh, indeed," laughed van Gulpendam, "that is your tack is it? It was not opium—what was it then?"

"Oh Kandjeng toean," smiled the other, "it was nothing but scrapings of opium pipes mixed with the thickened juice of certain plants."

"Well," said the Resident in a mocking tone of voice, "if that be so, then there is an end of the matter, then there is nothing illegal at all in it."

"Yes, yes," replied the other, "but the inspector of police insists that it is opium."

"The deuce he does!" said van Gulpendam.

"Yes," said the Chinaman, "and he has consulted a couple of Chinese experts, and these, not knowing where the stuff came from, and judging by the smell and the taste have come to the conclusion, and have publicly declared, that it is first class tjandoe, very superior to that which the government supplies us farmers with."

"You mean to tell me," cried van Gulpendam in amazement, "that the inspector has told you all that?"

"Yes, Kandjeng toean, and he has done more than that. He has placed a sample of it into the hands of a chemist."

"Well," said the other. "And what is the chemist's opinion?"

"He has made an affidavit," replied the Chinaman, "to the effect that it is real tjandoe containing thirty-two per cent. of morphine."

"That settles the matter," said the Resident. "I am sorry for it babah, I cannot help you at all, things must take their course."

"But," insinuated the other, "if the Kandjeng toean would—"

"No, no, babah!" said van Gulpendam in an absent kind of way, as if his mind was on something else. "No, babah, I can do nothing for you."

"I am very sorry to hear it," said the Chinaman affecting to sigh though the stereotyped smile still hovered on his lips. Then, with ready tact dropping that topic of conversation altogether, he began to talk about indifferent matters, about the gossip of the day, the state of trade, about the ships that had just come in, and so on—when suddenly he said: "Yesterday, you know, the *Wyberton* of the Rotterdam Lloyd came into harbour. She has brought me a splendid consignment of Havanah cigars. I have had a few of them packed up as samples in cases of a dozen. They are very fine indeed. I happen to have one of these little cases about me. Will the Kandjeng toean do me the favour of having a look at it?"

With these words the wily Chinaman produced a cigar-case, which, as far as outward appearance went, was really very pretty indeed, it was very tastefully embroidered with bunches of red roses.

The Resident took the case, looked at it, admired it, and opened it. It contained twelve cigars, very fine looking havanahs, which, by their fragrance, were undoubtedly of an excellent brand. But, as the Chinaman went on talking, the Resident looked at the case and its contents in a very abstracted mood, as if he hardly saw it at all, his thoughts were evidently elsewhere. At length, he handed the case back, and said, "Yes, a very pretty thing—it seems a very fine sample."

"Would the Kandjeng toean condescend to accept them at my hands?" asked the Chinaman with his most winning smile.

"What? you wish me—?"

"Oh sir, it is but the merest trifle. The Kandjeng toean will have the pleasure of smoking a really excellent cigar—I will answer for it—and he will be conferring the greatest favour upon me if he will accept them as a little present."

Without making any reply, without so much as a sign of consent, the Resident listlessly allowed the gift to drop on a little table that stood by his side, and, just as if nothing whatever had happened, he took up the conversation precisely where it had been broken off.

"When that opium came ashore," said he, "did anyone happen to be present?"

"No one, Kandjeng toean, but my two spies, Liem King and Than Khan."

"Can you trust the fellows?"

"Most absolutely," was the reply, "there is not the smallest fear from that quarter."

"And the opium was discovered, you say, close to the spot where Ardjan was picked up?"

"Not two hundred yards from where he was," replied the Chinaman.

"And they found the djoekoeng in which he came ashore did they not?" asked van Gulpendam.

"Yes, Kandjeng toean, it was a surf boat."

"That is all I want to know, babah," said the Resident.

The astute Chinaman took the hint, he rose and was preparing to leave; but the Resident motioned him back to his seat.

"You have not said a word yet, babah, about that other business," said van Gulpendam carelessly.

"What business?"

"Your son Lim Ho has treated Ardjan most barbarously."

"One has nothing but sorrow from one's children, Kandjeng toean," said the Chinaman piteously.

"That is all very fine," said the Resident, "but the chief medical officer has made an official report which is very serious, very serious indeed. I am afraid, I am afraid—"

"Ah, this is a world of suffering and woe, Kandjeng toean," sighed Lim Yang Bing most dolefully. "Is there no possible means of squaring it with the doctor?"

"Who knows," said van Gulpendam thoughtfully. "Now if I had the matter in hand, I might perhaps—"

"O pray, Kandjeng toean," whined the Chinaman. "Do pray help me I beseech you."

"I shall see," said van Gulpendam. "A great deal depends upon yourself, babah. You know the penalty for ill-treatment is very severe."

The Chinaman, in a moment, took the not too delicate hint. He felt in his pocket and drew forth a little silver tea-caddy of most exquisite workmanship. Said he; "That *Wyberton* I mentioned just now, has brought me some very fine silver ware from Paris. Just look at that fretwork. Do you think van Kempen in the Hague could turn out anything better than that?"

Van Gulpendam took the box. "Aye, aye," said he, as he examined it, "it is marvellously pretty—very tasteful I must say."

"I have had the box filled with the choicest Chousong, such tea never reaches Europe, it is reserved for the court at Pekin. Just smell it, Kandjeng toean, is it not delicious?"

The resident opened the tea-caddy and put his nose to it, but not before he had had a peep inside it. "Most delicious," he exclaimed. "Why, babah, you must send me some of that tea, we cannot get anything worth drinking here, the njonja is always grumbling at her storekeeper."

"Oh!" cried the Chinaman, "may I beg the Kandjeng toean to accept that little sample as an offering to the njonja?"

"Thank you very much, babah, I am pleased to accept it in her name. I am sure she will be delighted with it."

The face of the Celestial glowed with satisfaction; he felt that now he had his foot fairly in the stirrup. "I may hope then," said he, "that the Kandjeng toean will—"

"I can promise you nothing at all, babah," said the Resident. "I shall see, however, what I can do." He rose as he spoke—a sign that the interview was at an end; but suddenly a thought seemed to strike him. "Do you know who it is that has charged your son with ill-treating Ardjan?"

"Yes, I do, Kandjeng toean, it is Pak Ardjan, the father of the mate."

"He is a notorious opium smuggler, is he not? Some day or other he will burn his fingers at it."

The Chinaman looked up in surprise; but he saw through it.

"At least," continued van Gulpendam, in the most off-hand way, "that is what I hear from the police, it is no business of mine. I shall see what I can do."

Babah Lim Yang Bing stepped up to the great man and familiarly held out his hand; Jack was as good as his master now. But just at that moment a handsome big dog—one of Anna's favourites—came bounding into the pandoppo, and wagging his tail, came jumping up at his master. Van Gulpendam took the animal's paw and coolly placed it into the babah's outstretched palm.

"Oh, it is all the same to me, noble sir," said the Chinaman, with his false smile, as he heartily shook the dog's honest paw.

The Dutch official thoroughly understood those words of the Chinaman. As soon as he was alone in the pandoppo, he, with a greedy look, opened the cigar-case and emptied it on the table. His face beamed with joy, for round each havanah there was very neatly wrapped a bank-note of a thousand guilders, in such a manner that one half of the cigars only was covered, and nothing could be seen of the paper when first the case was opened. Next he put his fingers into the tea-caddy. Yes, there again he encountered the same soft kind of paper. He was about to pull it out; but suddenly he thought better of it, he hurriedly replaced the precious cigars, snatched up the case and the silver box, and rushed into his private office where he immediately sat down and began to write the letter which so puzzled the President of the Council at Santjoemeh. Just as he had sealed it, he heard his wife coming into the inner gallery, and taking leave of M'Bok Kârijâh.

"A lucky day," he whispered in her ear, as he threw his arm round her neck. "A lucky day," and thus he drew her along.

"A lucky day?" she asked, replying to his embrace by folding her arm round his waist as she gazed at him with moist and glittering eyes.

Thus they went to the bedroom. When he got there van Gulpendam carefully closed the door and double locked it. Then he drew his wife to the table, and, taking a seat, he shook out upon it the contents of the cigar-case and of the tea-caddy, while Laurentia stood by him, her eyes fixed upon the bits of paper. There were five-and-twenty of them, there could be no mistake about them, for the mark upon their silky surface told plainly enough that each represented the value of one thousand guilders. A shade of disappointment passed over Laurentia's handsome features. It passed away in an instant, and was gone long before her husband could notice it. He saw her eagerly seizing upon the notes, carefully unrolling them from the cigars and smoothing down those which had come out of the tea-caddy in a sadly crumpled condition.

"Twenty-five thousand guilders!" cried she. "A pretty sum indeed—Truly it is a lucky day, for added to what I have got—"

"What have you got?" cried her husband.

"Yes, what I have just now received from M'Bok Kârijâh!"

"Let us see! What did she give you?" eagerly cried van Gulpendam.

"I will show you presently; but first this." As she spoke she took up a little parcel which was lying on the table by the side of a cardboard box which bore marks of having already been opened. She then carefully stripped off and put aside the pisang-leaves in which the parcel was wrapped, and at length she produced a small cup of the commonest earthenware, which contained a greenish, quivering jelly, of most disgusting appearance. "First take this," said Laurentia, as, with a tiny Chinese spoon, she scooped out of the greenish mass, a piece about the size of a hazel-nut, and held it to her husband's lips as though she was going to feed him. "First take that, Gulpie, dear—and then I will show you."

Van Gulpendam cast a most comical look of despair at the gruesome morsel, while his face assumed an expression of loathing which baffles description. "That filthy stuff again," he whined submissively. "You know it is no good."

"Oh, yes," said she, "it is—this is quite a new drug. It must work, M'Bok Kârijâh brought it to me only this morning."

"Do you intend me to swallow that horrid stuff?"

"Come, Gulpie," said his wife, as she still held the spoon to his mouth. "Now, don't be childish, swallow it at once. You will see how it will work," continued she, as she patted his back with her hand. "Now, there's a dear, swallow it down, and then I will tell you how I have had as good a Hari ontong as you."

Whether his wife's coaxing words and ardent looks, or his intense curiosity to know what she had to tell him, overcame his repugnance matters but little. Suffice it to say, that the poor wretch shut his eyes, and opened his mouth, while his wife, with the spoon, put the pale-greenish mess upon his tongue. As he tasted it he heaved so violently with intense disgust, that an explosion seemed imminent.

"Come, swallow, swallow!" cried Laurentia, again patting his back with her soft hand. "So, so, that's right; and now clean the spoon, the stuff is much too precious to waste."

So the unhappy man was compelled to lick up and swallow the last vestige of the nauseous compound which clung to the spoon.

"And now," said he, "now for your story."

"Come here, Gulpie," said his wife, in her most coaxing manner. "Come here and sit down by me on the divan, and I will tell you all about it." She took up the box from the table, and seating herself cross-legged on the divan after the fashion of the natives, she drew her husband close to her side.

And now she proceeded to relate to him how M'Bok Kârijâh had, in the strictest confidence, told her how madly Lim Ho was in love with the baboe Dalima, and, as if they both did not know that well enough already, she added, with a strange smile, that he would do anything in the world to gain possession of the maiden. The forcible abduction from under the very eyes of her mistress was indeed proof sufficient of the ardour of his passion, and the poor fellow had been most grievously disappointed that he had been unable to attain his object.

Fair Laurentia did not tell her husband all this simply, and as a matter of fact story. No, no, she was an artiste in the arts of wheedling and seduction. She took her time and knew how to impart to her tale the necessary shades and tints—here and there seeming to hesitate as if modestly disinclined to enter into somewhat questionable details; and then again at the right moment launching out into a freedom of speech which threatened to become impassioned if it did not indeed actually border upon the indecent. And so she managed to finish her story by a glowing description of the ardent Chinaman and the personal charms of lovely Dalima.

Van Gulpendam had first listened to her attentively, her highly coloured narrative had greatly interested him. But—Was it the effect of the drug he had swallowed, or was it an occasional peep into fair Laurentia's half-open kabaja, or were there other influences at work which made him lose his mental balance? At all events, the man was trembling with excitement when his fair neighbour brought her story to an end with the words:

"M'Bok Kârijâh implored me to lend her my assistance and to exert my influence with Dalima to make her yield to Lim Ho's ardent passion. As earnest of the man's gratitude she offered me this."

Thus saying, Laurentia opened the box and drew forth a magnificent red coral necklace depending from which hung a large rosette of precious stones.

"Look, Gulpie, look!" she cried, triumphantly, "these brilliants alone are worth more than ten thousand guilders," and as she spoke she threw the necklace over her well-shaped shoulders. The deep red corals showed off splendidly on the soft pearly white skin, while the rich clasp of jewels lay glittering on her heaving bosom.

But van Gulpendam had no eyes for the costly gift. He clasped his fair wife to his breast as he exclaimed beside himself with passion:

"You are lovely, my Laurentia! You are too lovely!"

"The drug, the drug," cried she, "you see it is the drug! M'Bok Kârijâh has surpassed herself. You see, Gulpie, you see!"

"Yes; darling Laurie," cried he, in ecstasy. "It must be the stuff. I feel it working in my veins."

"Indeed, indeed, this is—this is indeed, a lucky day!"

CHAPTER VII.

A TRAITOR IN THE DESSA.

ABOUT twelve miles to the south-east of Santjoemeh, in a hilly country which offers to the eye a continual succession of picturesque and lovely views, lies the little dessa Kaligaweh. It is situated in the centre of an extensive forest of cocoa-nut trees which encloses it as in a circle of emerald, and which, viewed from an eminence close by, resembles a mighty garland of verdure whose tops waving in the gentle breeze have the appearance of a frame of grass-green lace-work.

This cocoa-nut forest may be said to form the outer court of the dessa, for the village itself lies concealed in a thick grove of fruit-trees in which the most splendid mangoes, the most delicious ramboetans, the most refreshing assams, the juiciest bliembiengs, the most fragrant djeroeks and the coolest djamboes, and many other gifts of intertropical Pomona grow up and flourish in the richest luxuriance. Here and there tufts of underwood fill the spaces between the little huts and the trees, and flowers in the wildest profusion fill the air with their fragrance and enchant the eye by their rich but harmonious diversity of colour.

The dessa itself is enclosed by dense rows of bamboo, the thick and tall Black bamboo, which furnishes the natives with the most useful building material, and whose long massive stalks growing quite close together and gracefully bending under the load of the heavy plumage of verdure they have to support, form an almost impenetrable hedge, while at the same time they cast the most grateful shade over the enclosure within.

Kaligaweh was but an inconsiderable dessa. Some thirty or forty huts scattered here and there in picturesque disorder among the fruit trees formed the centre of the small community. The inhabitants of this spot so highly favoured by nature occupied themselves, for the most part, with the culture of rice to which the soil was admirably adapted, and the fruitful rice-fields rose all around in the form of an amphitheatre on the hill-slopes. The lower grounds contained several fish-ponds well stocked with bandengs, djampals, Cataks, Gaboes, and many other kinds of fish, all of them highly esteemed by the European and Chinese inhabitants of Santjoemeh, and therefore fetching good prices in the market of that place. Hence the population of Kaligaweh might have been a highly prosperous and flourishing community, had it not been for the ravages which one fatal and all-destructive pest spread among them. Their bane was the passion for opium. That fatal drug had undermined not only their prosperity, but broken down also the constitutions of all those who gave themselves up to its use. It was a sad fact, alas, that the great majority of those who dwelt in Kaligaweh were enslaved to it; but sadder yet it was that there were not a few among them who could recall the good time when the name of opium was scarcely known there. In that short space of time, how complete a change had come over so lovely a spot!

About twelve years ago a native of the dessa, who, in his youth had left it to seek his fortune elsewhere, returned to Kaligaweh. This man, whose name was Singomengolo, but who usually was known as Singo, had let loose the opium fiend upon the quiet and innocent little dessa in which he was born.

Singo, on leaving home, had fallen into the hands of the recruiting serjeants. By encouraging his innate passion for gambling, and by initiating him into the mysteries of opium smoking, these soul-destroyers had, in an unguarded moment, induced him to enlist, and thus to bind himself to the service for a period of six years. The wretches helped the miserable man soon to get rid of the bounty in opium-dens, in gambling houses, at cock-fights, and in excesses of all kinds. Then for six years he was a soldier.

As soon as his time of service had expired, Singo left the army in which he had acquitted himself with some credit, and obtained a place as oppasser (policeman) under one of the government controllers in the interior of the island. He soon gave evidence of considerable skill as a detective, and earned for himself the reputation of a very sharp and clever officer. This reputation brought him under the notice of one of the agents of the opium farmer for the district, who recommended him to the Company; and the Company, appreciating his services, obtained for him the place of bandoelan or opium-detective at their chief office at Santjoemeh.

In that capacity, his dexterity and cunning, not only in the detection of opium smuggling but also in bringing to light other mysterious and shady transactions, won him the warm support of Lim Yang Bing, the wealthy opium farmer, who used constantly to employ him, especially in cases which had baffled the shrewdest of his agents and spies. Singo's services were, in fact, invaluable to his master; for whenever, for some reason or other, a man stood in the rich Chinaman's way, Singo could always be depended upon to find smuggled opium in his possession, though the victim might not have perhaps, in all his life, so much as seen the drug.

In the year 1874 Babah Lim Yang Bing, by sheer dint of bribery, contrived to get the number of opium stores in his district increased by ten; and among the unfortunate dessas which were thus poisoned by sanction of the Dutch government, was Kaligaweh. Now, it was easy enough to set up an opium den in the little village; but it was quite another matter to make it pay, which was all Lim Yang Bing cared for. As soon as the government had granted the license, an opium store arose in Kaligaweh, a hole filthy in the extreme, so as to remain faithful to the tradition of such dens. Over the door appeared a black board on which in huge white letters were conspicuously painted the words, "Opium store," in Dutch, in Javanese, and in Chinese, and in the characters peculiar to those tongues. The two Chinamen, who were entrusted with its management, did their very best to attract people, they lavished their most winning smiles upon the passers-by, they exhausted every means of enticing them to enter; but it was all in vain. Not a single man ever ventured to set foot in the noisome hole.

Babah Lim Yang Bing was not slow to perceive that so good an example would become contagious, and might spread among the other dessas of his district. It was quite obvious to the most casual observer, that Kaligaweh and its environs were wealthy and prosperous out of all comparison with the places where the opium trade flourished. Why, the mere outward appearance of its people was quite enough to show this; and the broad chests and sinewy arms of its men, and the firmly rounded hips and full shoulders of its women and girls, whose bronzed skin bore the ruddy glow of health, formed the most startling contrast with the ghastly, sunken countenances, and shrivelled frames of the walking skeletons which one encountered in other less favoured localities.

But, chiefly was the eye of that cunning Chinaman attracted by the rich rice-fields which covered the entire district, and which pleasantly surrounded its little dessas nestling in the dark foliage of their fruit trees as islets amidst a sea of emerald, when the young crops imparted light and cheerfulness to the scene; or presently again would encircle these dessas as in a bright band of gold, when the stalks, ripening under the tropical sun, were bending under their weight of grain, and waved to the soft harvest breeze.

In whatever season of the year, or from whatever side one might, at that time, approach Kaligaweh, its fields testified to the frugal industry of its inhabitants. They always spoke of regular and systematic cultivation, and of careful and constant irrigation, and they thus loudly proclaimed—a fact with which the reader is already acquainted—that its people were prosperous and happy, and led very different lives to the squalid and wretched existence which was dragged out in the places where the passion for opium had taken root.

All this it was Lim Yang Bing's purpose to alter. Not only was the material welfare of the dessa a thorn in his side; but his covetous nature longed to transfer the earnings of its simple and frugal population to his own already over-filled pockets. His attempt with the opium-store had hitherto, we have seen, borne no fruit; it had proved a failure, and had brought loss rather than profit to its owner. He had determined, at any cost, to bring about a change.

On a certain evening, it was towards the end of harvest, the population of Kaligaweh, men and women, young men and maidens, were returning homewards from the fields. The women had been hard at work all day, handling the sickles and cutting the ripe grain from the stalks, while the men had been no less busily engaged in taking the little bundles from the hands of the reapers, and binding them together into big bundles. The faces of all were flushed with exertion, and glowing with satisfaction, for the crop this year was a heavy one; no plagues of any kind had interfered with its growth, so that the landowners looked forward to laying up many pikols in their barns, and the more humble labourers could count upon a plentiful payment in kind. That, in itself, was quite sufficient to account for the universal good-humour and gaiety which prevailed.

The rice-harvest is, indeed, in the rural districts of the rich island of Java, a great national festival, a day of joy, which, for its simple people, has more real significance than all the other Mahommedan festivals. It is then for them fair time. Clad in their gay, many-coloured dresses, the women and maidens assemble on the green; then many a heart, for the first time, feels the tender passion; then many an old love-affair is settled, and many a "yes" is softly murmured. The climate, the surrounding scenery in those glad harvest-fields, all invite to merriment and glee. True it is, we must not deny it, that, on such occasions, unguarded innocence is sometimes betrayed, and that, now and then, an offering is brought to the shrine of Lucina; but, much more frequently, the vows then made will presently be ratified and confirmed by the priest, and, at the very worst, no such frightful consequences ensue as are wont to arise in more highly civilized society.

On this evening, as the merry bands of reapers approached the dessa, the lively tones of the cymbal fell upon their ears. The people looked at one another in astonishment at the unwonted sounds, and were at a loss to know who had prepared for them this pleasant surprise.

When they came to the village green, they saw two booths erected under the splendid Wariengien or wild-fig trees which overshadowed the dessa, and over each of these booths there waved the Dutch flag.

One of them was, as yet, closed, but in the back of the other were seated, cross-legged, a band of musicians, who made the air resound with their inspiriting strains. In front of this orchestra, a space was left vacant, the ground of which had been levelled and sprinkled with fine sand, and the booth was fairly well illuminated with lanterns of various colours. A loud cheer arose from the village crowd, for now they began to see that they might expect a much richer treat than a mere concert.

Singomengolo, whom Lim Yang Bing had despatched with plenary powers to Kaligaweh and who had provided this entertainment for his friends in the dessa, was standing close by leaning up against one of the bamboo stems, which supported the roof of the booth, and was, with sundry nods and smiles, welcoming the fresh arrivals who were, for the most part, old acquaintances of his, and who warmly greeted him on his return to the dessa.

In a twinkling, the sickles, the bands of straw, and the bundles of rice were stowed away, and the broad-brimmed hats, with which the labourers protected themselves at their work from the full glare of the mid-day sun, were laid aside. Soon the entire population came crowding to the green, and romping and playing filled the open space in front of the booth, then by degrees seated themselves on the soft carpet of tuft.

Meanwhile, the sun had gone down in the West, and the stars were coming out one by one, and began to show their soft and twinkling light, while the moon, rising in the dark blue vault of heaven as a large blood-red disc, shed the fantastic shadows of the Wariengien trees upon the assembled groups. Round about the tree-tops innumerable swarms of bats flitted in giddy mazes uttering their peculiar, short, shrill cry, and high above them, in the evening air, sundry flying squirrels kept circling round mysteriously, who seemed to be selecting the juiciest fruits on which, presently, they intended to make a feast.

When all were seated, and some degree of order had been obtained; at a signal from Singo, the cymbals and all the instruments in the orchestra struck up, and filled the air with pleasant melody.

"Bogiro, Bogiro!" shouted the younger and more enthusiastic part of the audience.

That first piece, indeed, which may most fitly be compared with our overture, is one in which all the instruments of a Javanese orchestra play together, and which serves as an introduction to the programme which is to follow. At times, it must be said, the cymbals would make a most discordant and deafening noise, but this was varied now and then by solos which were musical and pleasant enough to the ear. Evidently the musicians were this evening on their mettle, they exerted themselves to the utmost to deserve the applause of their simple audience; and the profound silence with which that wanton and excitable crowd sat listening, sufficiently testified to the success of their endeavours.

At the last clash of the cymbals, the people broke silence, and by ringing shouts and lively cheers gave vent to their satisfaction as a Westerly audience would have shown its approval by clapping of hands.

Singomengolo, with the help of a couple of his assistants, and aided by the two Chinamen who kept the opium-store, then offered the notables, who were present, cigars wrapped in leaves, while sweets and confectionery were handed round to the more distinguished ladies of the company. Round the two booths several stalls had been erected, at which the lower classes could go and gratify their tastes. The satisfaction of these poor people was unbounded, when they found that all these dainties were provided free of charge, and that it was in this generous manner that Singo had determined to celebrate his return among them. On all sides, praises and thanks were lavished on his liberality. But the tempter took good care not to let them know that the tobacco of which those pleasant little cigars were made had been well steeped in infusion of opium, and that the pernicious juice of the Polyanthes tuberosa largely entered into the composition of the nice sweets he had so bountifully served out. Perfectly unconscious of this treachery the poor people thoroughly enjoyed their treat, and were loud in praises to their generous friend.

Presently, the cymbal was heard again, and every one hurried back to his seat. At the first notes of the piece which followed a loud cheer arose; "Taroe Polo, Taroe Polo" was the cry as the people recognised the well known sounds, then all sat silent and listened with rapt attention.

The story or legend of which the musicians were about to give a musical interpretation, was familiar to almost every inhabitant of the dessa, yet here and there small groups gathered round some old man as he told the oft-repeated tale to his younger friends.

The music of Java is the interpretation, the embodiment, the rhythmical expression of the numberless fables, legends, and romantic tales current in the island. It is inseparably connected with them just as appropriate gesture and modulation of the voice are the necessary accompaniments of oratory. Of these legends the story of Taroe Polo is one of the prettiest and wellcalculated to awaken the softest emotions in the breast of the susceptible Javanese.

In very low tones, which blended with the notes of the music, but yet in an audible voice, the old man said:

Taroe Polo was a young prince who one day while he was out hunting lost his way in the dense tropical forest, and as he was wandering about, suddenly came upon an old ruinous palace the existence of which had never been suspected. Making his way through the tangled undergrowth, he soon came up to the walls and entered the ruin. As he roamed about the spacious and much decayed galleries, he was greatly surprised to find himself in an apartment which the hand of time had spared, and which retained all its former freshness and splendour. As he looked round in amazement at so sudden and strange a sight, his eye lit upon a young damsel of wondrous beauty surrounded by a train of attendants, who, although unable to vie with their mistress in loveliness, yet were all comely and young. She was a princess, a king's daughter, confined by the cruelty of her mother to that lonely spot, because she would give no ear to the suit of an old though powerful monarch, who was anxious to make her his bride. The moment prince Taroe Polo caught sight of this enchanting vision, he felt a fire kindle in his breast, and casting himself down at her feet, he began to pour out to her the tale of his passionate love; hear how well the little silver cymbal and the strips of resonant wood struck with small hammers with their soft silvery tones express the tender feelings of the prince, how they seem to sing, to woo, to implore as the young man kneels to his love.

The young maiden listens but too willingly to his eager suit, her bosom heaves, she sighs, the flute with its languishing notes quite plainly tells the tale.

But she is compelled to repress her emotion, for she is guarded by her attendants, who are her mother's slaves, and who one and all will be ready to betray her. She replies in broken accents, in single syllables, the harp faithfully gives back her confusion.

Gently however, and with the cunning of love she tries to get rid, if but for a few moments, of those who stand around her. She succeeds, and now the passionate joy of the lovers breaks forth unrestrained. How well that burst of passion is rendered in full symphony by the two stringed viol, the accordian, the flute and the zither. Thus having, for a while, given way to their feelings, they suddenly remember that they can never win the mother's consent, that her followers are incorruptible and that their only chance of bliss is to flee away together—far away to the mountains. The lovely princess, however, will not yield, her maiden pride refuses to take the irrevocable step. But the prayers of Taroe Polo, now soft as the gentle breeze which rustles in the tree-tops, then vehement and passionate as the tempest blast which howls over the fields—at length prevail. Her own heart pleads for him, her love is sounding his praise, still she wavers, she hesitates. But the thought of her mother and of the fate which awaits her should the secret of her love become known, quite overcomes her. With downcast eyes, but with a smile of joy she casts herself into the arms of her love, and with him she flies—she flies to the blue mountains, which loom far away in the mist. The whole Javanese orchestra celebrates this happy close with a full burst of melody, the cymbals with rapid clang indicate the swiftness of their flight, and then the coy sighs of the maiden are succeeded by the jubilant song of the prince, and a loud clash of victory brings the piece to a triumphant close.

The whole population of Kaligaweh—simple folk—sat awe-struck listening with breathless attention until the last sounds of the gamelang had faded, quivering away in the distance.

The moon had meanwhile risen, had lost her blood-red hue and was now prying down upon that rustic village green through the tall Wariengien trees and flooding all those who sat there with silvery light.

By this time the other booth had been opened and within a group of men could be seen cleverly manipulating some packs of Chinese cards. Your Javanese is a born gambler. With him the love of play is the ruling passion, nay the mother of all others, which without that excitement might be harmless enough.

The sight of that booth is irresistible, many of the men rise at once to take part in the seductive game, whilst others who are anxious to see the theatrical performance which was to follow, begin to ask Singo or his attendants for one of those cigars which they had found so delicious. The poor little women too are so fond of those nice little sweetmeats and cannot help showing that a second edition of those dainties would not be unwelcome. But, the crafty minions of Lim Yang Bing were on the watch. With the most pleasant smiles they told the company that the supply intended for free distribution had come to an end; but that the stall-keepers were ready to sell cigars and sweetmeats to anyone who would pay for them. It was a sore disappointment; the stall-keepers were ready to sell, but where was the money to come from? For though we know that the people of Kaligaweh were in every way prosperous, yet there was but very little of the filthy dross of this world among them.

Singomengolo read their feelings at once, and with devilish craft he pointed to the open gambling booth. There, he grinned, plenty of all sorts of coins could be picked up in a few minutes. It was a mere matter of luck.

His words acted like oil cast upon the fire.

"But to play, one must have ready money to stake," suggested one of the bystanders.

And how then about the rice which you have just brought home? said the tempter with a leer worthy of Satan himself.

A new light dawned upon the wretched people. The rice, of course, how was it that they had never thought of that?

"And will they take rice for payment?" asked one.

"Take it?" cried Singo, "of course they will and allow you the full market value for it." "And," continued the tempter, "You can see for yourselves that to-day is a lucky day for you. Look at Pak Ardjan how he is rattling the rix-dollars. It was true enough, there stood Pak Ardjan, the father of the late mate—there he stood dancing and jumping about like a madman, while he rattled in his closed hands the three rix-dollars he had just won. Three rix-dollars! Why that was at least half a month's wages! And to win all that money in a few minutes! All one wanted was but a little pluck—fortune would be kind enough. Thus spake many of the poor creatures, little knowing what nets were spread around them. Still there was a great deal of hesitation—men had not altogether taken leave of their senses. The great majority still held back, and but very few bundles of rice had found their way to the gambling booth.

Just then—Kaseran and Wongsowidjojo and Kamidin, and Sidin, and so many others began to cut the same capers as Pak Ardjan. They also danced about, they also shouted for joy, they showed the people—the one three, the other five, a third seven, and yet another ten guilders which they had made in a twinkling. That Singo really was an excellent fellow, he had returned to make the fortunes of all his friends.

Then there was no holding them. Soon the whole booth was full of men blindly intent upon tempting fortune, while outside the cymbal resounded, and the voices of the actresses (?) were beginning to make themselves heard.

But the keepers of the gambling-booth were no fools. Their policy was not to frighten the poor dessa-people at this first attempt; and evidently only a very small portion of the rice-harvest had fallen into their hands. The cheerful and happy faces of the gamblers told plainly enough that there were not many losers among them, and if here and there one had been unlucky, it was always one who could very well stand a slight reverse of fortune. In truth, the "croupiers" did but very little business that night, though they were clever enough to take care, now that the ball had been set rolling, that their losses were not ruinously heavy. In fact, as the night grew on, the rix-dollars of the winners were imperceptibly but surely melting away to guilders and the guilders to still smaller change. Yet, on the whole, the gamblers had won sufficient to make them all noisy and happy.

At length came the hour of midnight, and the heavy gong was struck at the guard-house. The booth-keepers declared that they intended to close, that they had had a really bad night, and they actually did blow out the candles and shut up the place. Many of the people were still lingering about and listening to the cymbal and the craving for cigars began to be felt again. Thus the stall keepers did a roaring trade, and seeing that they also were in the pay of the Babah Lim Yang Bing the money which the confederates had lost at cards, managed to come back to them again through another channel, so that the sacrifice, after all, was not a very alarming one.

At length the store of those pleasant cigars, which was not a very large one to start with, was exhausted. Then, with an indescribably low and nasty smile, Singo and his accomplices began to point to the opium-den where, for the same money, much more real enjoyment could be obtained.

In that wretched hole some girls were publicly seated on the rough benches, and with their shapely fingers were daintily rolling the little balls of opium, and casting seductive looks, coupled with wanton gestures, at the poor victims who stood gazing at the open door of that fatal den without being able quite to pluck up the courage to enter. Alas! for many of them, the temptation was too strong. Excited by the poison which they had already imbibed in considerable quantity—seduced by the wanton allurements of those fair women—first one gave way, then another, and although that night not every compartment of the opium-den was occupied, yet the Chinamen who kept it had every reason to be satisfied.

When Lim Yang Bing was told of the result of that night's work he rubbed his hands together as he chuckled, that "Singomengolo is really an invaluable fellow—I must not lose sight of him."

CHAPTER VIII.

DECAY OF THE DESSA.—ARREST OF PAK ARDJAN.

THIS first fairly successful attempt upon the little dessa was systematically repeated, and every evening the inspiriting tones of the cymbal resounded on the green of Kaligaweh, and every evening also the temptations described in the former chapter were renewed. All this might cost Lim Yang Bing some money at first; but he knew well enough that he would be the gainer in the end and that his capital would soon return to him with ample interest. By degrees it became less and less necessary to allow the gamblers to win; and it was not very long before such a thing only happened now and again so that the hope of gain might not die out altogether. Gradually the poor deluded people began to lose more and more; and one bundle of rice after another passed into the hands of the sharpers who, it must be said, gave liberal prices; and allowed somewhat more than the full market value for the produce.

But it was not only the spirit of gambling which had thus been aroused in Kaligaweh; together with that degrading passion—perhaps in consequence of it—the abuse of opium began to increase to an alarming extent. Six months, indeed, had scarcely elapsed before it became a notorious fact that a very considerable part of the population had taken to opium smoking; and—sadder still—that the opium farmers found powerful allies in the women of the dessa, who very soon began to perceive the influence which the drug had upon their husbands, and who, instead of trying to arrest the unfortunate creatures on their road to ruin, rather encouraged their fatal passion.

One reason of this was, that the terrible effects of the poison did not at once manifest themselves. No—the enemy made his approaches in the dark, he advanced slowly but surely.

At first the quantity used was but very small, a couple of matas or so a day, not even as much as that, were for those primitive people who were wholly unaccustomed to the drug quite sufficient to procure blissful rest and delightful sleep, and to call up visions of the houris with which Mohammed has peopled his paradise. Double that quantity would produce exuberant gaiety and excite to the most inordinate passions. And that peace, that excitement, that bliss could be purchased at the opium-store for fourteen cents (about 2½d.) a mata. It was indeed dirt-cheap!

But—though in the beginning of his downward course, the opium smoker could rest satisfied with so moderate an allowance—albeit even this did not fail to make a breach in his modest budget seeing that the expenditure was pretty constant—presently his constitution began to get seasoned to it, and it took a much greater quantity of the poison to have the desired effect. At first a man would only occasionally indulge and take up the bedoedan (opium pipe) say, once a week; but gradually his nervous system began to grow accustomed to the stimulant, and then a craving for the poison began to be felt, so that already several men could be pointed out who, as soon as the influence of the narcotic had passed off, were dull, downcast, nervous and restless; and who, in consequence, felt utterly miserable. There was but one means to raise them out of their state of depression; and so they would take up the bedoedan again and swallow another dose of the poison. And thus by degrees it came to pass that at length there was with them scarcely an interval between one fit of intoxication and the next. That thus the prosperity of the dessa was inevitably destined to disappear did not admit of the slightest doubt.

Not only was the actual expense of this habitual indulgence greater than the means of many would allow; but the fatal habit engendered other cravings which also had to be gratified, and which helped to sweep away the little that opium had left. Moreover the love of work—never under any circumstances too strong in a tropical land—was first seriously impaired, then wholly extinguished, and, when not under the influence of the opiate the smoker was a slovenly, drowsy, lazy and objectless being, wholly unfit for the least exertion, whom nothing could rouse into activity but fresh indulgence in the baneful remedy. Indeed the sanitary condition of the people of Kaligaweh had degenerated with such alarming rapidity, that the most casual observer could not fail to be struck by the change. If, in days gone by, a European visited the dessa—which it is true but very seldom happened—he could not fail to admire the healthy and sturdy look of its inhabitants; but now he constantly came upon men and women whose ghastly appearance could not but excite in him the deepest pity. There could be no mistake about it, at a single glance it was evident that he had before him the victims of the terrible opium-fiend.

Those grey livid faces from which every trace of the Oriental bronze tint had faded; that wrinkled skin which looked like parchment overheated without being scorched; those wasted angular features which gave to the head the appearance of an unsightly skull; those deep sunken eyes with their jaded look and the dark blue rings around them; those stooping forms and receding chests; that extraordinary emaciation of the upper body, of which every rib could be counted, and which conveyed an idea of transparency, for the specimens which one met had hardly a rag about them; barely a bit of dirty clothing wrapped round their loins to hide their nakedness; that deep distressing cough which came, with hollow sound, from the labouring breast and spoke of lungs wasted with disease whilst it seemed to shake to pieces the entire frame; those spindle legs, so poor, so meagre, that they seemed hardly able to totter along under the weight of the body they had to support; all these formed the stereotyped picture of defaced humanity and bore incontestable witness to the protracted sufferings and unfathomable misery which had reduced these poor blighted creatures to mere walking skeletons.

When later on Singomengolo revisited the dessa where he first saw the light, and where, as a thanksoffering, he had planted the most terrible curse, his lip must have curled with a Satanic smile. Yes, all he could now see there; those cocoanut trees overgrown with moss and parasites; those orchards neglected and decayed; those unwatered rice-fields and half-tilled fields; those two or three oxen whose lean and sickly appearance spoke plainly of neglect and starvation; yes, all these things were his work. It was *his* fault that now the harvest was scanty and worthless; it was *his* fault that even that wretched harvest had been pawned long before the ani anis had so much as begun their work; it was *his* fault that clothes, furniture, tools, everything, had been sold or pawned for next to nothing, and that all had been swallowed up in the bottomless pit of that national curse.

But Babah Lim Yang Bing the opium farmer and his friends Ong Sing Beh and Kouw Thang the keepers of the pawnshop and of the gambling-booth were thriving wonderfully, and by their glorious aid the Dutch Treasury also was doing well in comparison, at least, with former days when those three noble sources of income contributed little or nothing to that unsatiable Moloch, the Revenue. Gaily therefore might the Dutch flag wave in the breeze, and proudly might the Dutch arms display their manly motto "Je Maintiendrai" above the opium-den, the gambling-booth and the pawn-shop—that much worshipped Trinity which forms the most elaborate system of extortion under which ever a poor conquered race has groaned.

Among the first of the infatuated wretches which fell into the pit so carefully dug for them, was Pak Ardjan, the father of the mate of the schooner brig Kiem Ping Hin. But a short time ago he was looked upon as a thriving and well-to-do Javanese peasant, the possessor of a yoke of powerful oxen, now he had gambled, rioted and smoked away house and goods and had plunged his helpless family into the most hideous misery.

Where was now the pleasant little cottage with its neat hedge of golden-yellow bamboo and its clean dark-brown roof of thatch made of leaves? Where was that comfortable little house in which Pak Ardjan was wont to sit with wife and children, passing his days in peace and cheerfully looking forward to the future?

Alas! the miserable hovel which now barely sheltered the once happy family was small, low, close, in fact a ruin. The single room of which it consisted was pervaded by that offensive musty smell which decaying bamboo generally emits. One look at the walls, the lower parts of which had already rotted away while the upper were rapidly crumbling under the attacks of the white ant, and one glance at the roof which was in one place bulging inwards and in another fast going to dust, was quite sufficient to account for the closeness of the air. On the bits of matting, which covered the still more filthy floor, the children were rolling about, many of them naked as they were born, while the mother and father, if he happened to be at home, clad in rags which were never washed and were leaving their bodies in tatters sat crouching on the floor stupidly gazing at the scene of desolation before them. Gazing! aye, if the stony mechanical stare could be called by that name. For the father had lost all consciousness of the hopeless misery of his family. The frightful selfishness produced by the abuse of opium: the constantly growing indifference to all things round about him, even to his own wife and children; the rapidly increasing love of idleness, and incapacity for work, for care, for exertion in fact of any kind which at length made him utterly unable to think of anything by day or night except of how he might gratify his passion and the other cravings it engendered, and for which he was driven to sacrifice everything. All this had clouded his sight, and as a man stone-blind he was tottering on the very brink of a precipice.

Whilst he was in the first lethargic state brought on by the moderate use of the narcotic, he would be quiet, peaceful and contented, and would dose away and dream and build up for himself—for himself only—a paradise in which none but sensual pictures presented themselves to his eye and to his mind. Then as he continued to smoke, and when he reached the next stage—the stage of frenzy—he would, regardless of his children's presence, shamelessly pursue his wife round the cabin, for at such times she seemed to him the houri of his dreams, and then, in that wretched hovel at any hour of the night or day, scenes would be enacted such as the poor innocent children ought never to have witnessed. For, at such times the man was like a brute beast, wholly incapable of bridling his degraded passions.

Then the final paroxysm would be reached, and the effect of the dreadful poison would begin to wear off; and then the wretched creature would fall into a state of utter prostration, of annihilation which for himself, and worse still for his family, was indeed a cup of woe. Then the smoker would begin to tremble all over, then he became restless and uneasy, then his entire nervous system seemed to be out of joint, then every limb would be racked with pain—then he would moan most piteously, and cry like a child, sobbing and declaring that he was at the point of death and then—yes; then there was but one single means to relieve him and to bring him back out of that state of intolerable agony, and that was once again to grasp the pipe and to fight the disease with the poison which had caused it. Then the wife had to run out to buy opium—where the money was to come from, that was her business.

Then one of the children had to knead and roll the opium-balls and another little one had to hold the lamp which, for that kind of smoking, is indispensable, and a third had to make strong coffee which was generally got by theft out of the government-plantations. And if, from sheer want of money, all this could not be done—nay even when it was not done quite quickly enough for the impatience of the nervous sufferer—then the wretched man would fill the hut with wailing and lamentation, with curses and revilings which drove its inmates to the verge of despair.

Amidst such surroundings as these Ardjan had grown up, and although he had not fallen as deeply as his father, yet in the years of his childhood, the age which is most susceptible of good or evil, his heart and mind had received the impressions which made it possible for him later on to take service on board a smuggling-brig, and to make him feel towards the company which employed him in its nefarious transactions, such loyalty as we heard him express in the djaga monjet before Lim Ho the son of Lim Yang Bing the opium farmer at Santjoemeh.

So long as Ardjan, who was the eldest son, was but a child, the family was plunged in the depths of bestial degradation; but when he had grown up and, after having served awhile as a sailor in a government vessel, had gone on board the Kiem Ping Hin, things began somewhat to mend at home in the dessa. This was especially the case when young Ardjan, who had a very good head on his shoulders, was promoted to be mate of the smuggling brig. In that capacity he had constant opportunities of handling the cargo, and of such a drug as opium, which takes up but little space, he could very easily now and then appropriate to himself quantities of comparatively considerable value. This he did the more readily, and with the less reluctance, as his notions on the *meum* and *tuum* were of the vaguest description. The opium thus pilfered he used to deliver to his father who, in this manner, was enabled, not only fully to indulge in his ruling passion, but also to dispose of the superfluity to his neighbours. In this illegal traffic Pak Ardjan frequently made considerable gains, which, however, far from being of any substantial benefit to his empoverished household, would always be squandered with lavish extravagance.

Such was the state of things when Resident van Gulpendam gave Lim Yang Bing the hint that Pak Ardjan was, in the estimation of the police, held to be a notorious smuggler.

From what has been said above it is evident that what the Resident had said was true, the police had their suspicions, and had often been on the old smuggler's track, without ever having been able to bring the offence home to him. It must be said indeed, that so long as Ardjan was on board the Kiem Ping Hin they made no very determined efforts to convict his father. Equally true it was that Pak Ardjan, not knowing at the time that his son lay under suspicion of having brought on shore the discovered opium, had laid a formal accusation against Lim Ho, on account of the brutal manner in which he had treated his son. Now, the old opium-smoker had taken this step, not because he felt any pity for his son, nor because he wished to be revenged upon the Chinaman for the wrong he had thus inflicted upon one of his family—still less had he done so because he was anxious that the offender should receive condign punishment. Oh no, Pak Ardjan was not actuated by any such motives as these.

A short time before his adventure at the Moeara Tjatjing Ardjan had procured for his father a few katties of opium. So long as the supply lasted, the old man had not troubled himself in the least about the treatment his son had undergone; but when he saw that the supply was beginning to run low, then he began to look with apprehension to the future, and especially alarmed was he when he heard that Ardjan had exchanged the hospital for the jail. His poor muddled brain fancied that he might hasten Ardjan's release by making a charge against Lim Ho; and he had been further encouraged to take the step by the advice of a pettifogging lawyer, who thought that, in an action against the rich son of the still more wealthy opium-farmer, he had discovered a very pretty little vein of gold. Thus the charge was, in the proper form, laid before the Court at Santjoemeh and a prosecution against Lim Ho was ordered accordingly.

This matter the president of the Council had put into the hands of his young colleague, van Nerekool, and he, most anxious that justice should be done and that the miscreant should pay the legal penalty for his offence; and glad also, thus to be able to perform the promise which he had made to Anna, the fair daughter of the Resident, that he would do his best to save Dalima's lover, had readily undertaken the case, and was confident that he would be able to bring it to a successful issue.

But, on a certain afternoon, while the sun was yet high in the heavens, Pak Ardjan had gone to have a look at his store of opium which he had secreted by burying it deep in the ground, and heaping over the place a heavy layer of stones. Much to his regret he found, upon opening his store, that, at the most, he had but a couple of thaël left. These he proceeded to carry home with him; for he had promised some opium-smoking friends to let them have a supply that evening, and, as they were good customers and paid him handsomely, he would not disappoint them.

When he reached home his children informed him that Singomengolo had made his appearance in the dessa, and had been making sundry enquiries about him. The appearance itself of the man in the dessa, was nothing very extraordinary, nor was it, under the circumstances, strange that Pak Ardjan's name should have been mentioned by him. But somehow or other an accountable feeling of distrust came over the old man which impelled him to try and hide the opium he had about him. Now if he had been in his normal condition he would straightway have returned to the ravine and buried his treasure safely in its former hiding place, before further steps could be taken against him. But the fit of depression was on him, his nerves were again beginning to play tricks with him, his mental powers were, as usual after prolonged abstinence, growing confused—in short he was bordering on that stage in which he would need another dose of opium to pick him up. Accordingly, he set aside a couple of matas for his own use, and, having carefully wrapped the remainder in nipah-leaves, he thrust the packets for concealment behind the attapa-leaves which formed the crazy roof of his cabin.

This done, it was the old story again, and the whole family had to set to work to minister to him in his disgusting opium debauch.

But as he lay stretched there on the bench, and just as he was beginning to light his third pipe, before that, therefore, he was wholly under the influence of the poppy-juice, Singomengolo suddenly appeared on the door-step, accompanied by four or five policemen, and by the two Chinamen, who kept the opium-store. The instant he crossed the threshold, the bandoelan knew what was going on within, although Pak Ardjan had started up, and with some dexterity, had managed to hide his pipe under the filthy pillow which is inevitably present on every couch, and his children had secreted the lamp and the yet unsmoked opium.

The sickly sweetish smell, however, which pervaded the close stuffy room could not deceive anyone, least of all a bandoelan so thoroughly experienced as was the agent of the opium-farmer.

"There has been opium smoked here!" he cried in a peremptory tone, as he and his followers made their way into the cabin.

"Oh no," stammered Pak Ardjan in dismay, "oh no, indeed there has not!" while his wife and children, like so many frightened sheep, huddled together in a corner.

"Guard the door and the windows," cried Singo to his policemen, and then turning again upon Pak Ardjan he repeated more sternly even than before, "You have been smoking opium, I tell you!"

"Oh no, indeed I have not," replied the unfortunate man.

"Why there is the pipe," cried the opium hunter, as he triumphantly drew the *corpus delicti* from under the pillow. "Why here is the pipe, and quite hot too!"

Pak Ardjan already beside himself with fear felt completely crushed at this evident proof of his guilt.

"Where is the opium?" asked Singomengolo in threatening tones.

Pak Ardjan returned no answer.

"Well, never mind," said Singo, "we shall soon find it," and a horrid smile crossed his lips.

He made a signal to the Chinamen, and to the policemen who were not engaged in watching the door and windows; and then ensued a search, we may call it a hunt, the description of which may well seem incredible to those who do not know that such frightful scenes are not at all of uncommon occurrence.

Under the couch, under the mats which covered the floor, they searched, they rooted up the very floor of the cabin, they poked about under the stove and in the ashes of that very primitive kind of cooking-apparatus; pillows were rent open, and their contents scattered on the floor; the few boxes and baskets were torn open, and the noisome rags they contained were shaken and contemptuously flung aside; the poor miserable furniture, a few pots and pans, the rice-kettle, the tombok-block, the rice-panniers, even the sirih-box were turned over, but nothing—nothing could they find.

Singomengolo was angry. Now he ordered a body-search to be made.

First they seized upon Pak Ardjan and, though he offered some resistance, he was, with sundry kicks and blows, very soon shaken out of the few filthy rags which hung about him, and, in his hideous leanness, he stood there naked before the eyes of his family. The sense of decency, which never leaves even the most utterly degraded, made the poor man cower down moaning to the ground trying to hide his nakedness from the eyes of his children.

Then came the mother's turn, and the turn of the children—some of them girls from seven to fourteen years of age. Regardless alike of the mother's feelings or of the innocence of childhood, the inhuman monsters proceeded in their search, and a scene was then enacted so hideous, so disgusting, that over it we must draw a veil.

The children cried, the girls sobbed and wept, the mother shrieked under this base and violent treatment, it was of no avail. But presently, one of the policemen rudely seized upon the eldest daughter, poor little Sarina, a girl of fourteen; she, in her fright, dropped her sarong, and uttered a scream of terror. That cry made Pak Ardjan bound to his feet, madly he flung himself upon the cowardly wretch, with one wrench he dragged the fellow's sabre from its scabbard, and with its edge he dealt the miscreant two such blows as sent him, sorely wounded and howling with pain, flying from the scene of his dastardly exploit. But the poor father thus goaded to madness and blinded by fury, whose withered arm and wasted frame could not endure any sustained exertion, was at once overpowered and disarmed before he could strike another blow in defence of his outraged household. They bound him most cruelly, they tied his ankles together and forced the rough and prickly gemoetoe-cords between his toes, which at the slightest movement, put the unfortunate man to excruciating torture. Next they proceeded to handcuff him; but, as the manacles were much too wide to confine his shrivelled wrists, they drove in between the arm and the iron, rough pieces of firewood, and this caused such intolerable pain that a lamentable howl came from Pak Ardjan's lips—a howl most like that of some poor beast in its dying agony.

But now the opium? The opium? Hitherto none had been found.

Singomengolo stood scratching his ear. He was, indeed, in a most awkward predicament.

"What a rage the Kandjeng toean Resident will be in," muttered he. But he did not mind him much. He would bluster no doubt a good deal and bark; but he would take good care not to bite.

But, what would Babah Lim Yang Bing think of it? might he not look with suspicion upon all this fruitless zeal.

And then the the newspapers! What if they began to talk—and talk those confounded papers would there could be no doubt about it.

And the judges! What if they should take it up? They must take it up of course. Pak Ardjan had violently, and with arms in his hand, resisted the police—the opium police. And that was a crime which could not be hushed up. That was one of the offences which the Dutchmen always punished with the greatest severity. Yes, but then the fact would come out that there had been a visitation, a pretty severe visitation, and that nothing had been found. And then other matters might, and would probably, leak out. Aye, they had handled the little girls a little too brutally. And those judges were such an inquisitive lot, they were sure to get to the bottom of it all. He was in an awkward plight. Oh! had he but found the opium! Or better still, had he but taken his usual precautions!

"And yet," muttered he, as his hawk-like eye darted round the little hut, "I had such very precise instructions. I was to wait until Pak Ardjan had returned from the ravine, then—But would it not have been much wiser to surprise him in the ravine?—No, no—that would never have done—he might have sworn that he had found the opium there by chance, and those judges are so lenient, they will believe anything, and they never convict if there is the possibility of a doubt. No, no, the opium must—it shall—be found in Pak Ardjan's own possession, that only will be conclusive evidence of guilt. But—I cannot find it—Eh! eh!" he exclaimed, "what have we here?" With one bound Singomengolo reached the corner where a slight bulge in the roof seemed to look as if it had quite lately been disturbed. The edges of the nipah-leaves did not look quite so dark in that spot as the others which had been exposed to the smoke. The bandoelan thrust his hand into the roof, he felt about for a few moments, and then, he drew forth two small parcels. These he hastily unwrapped and uttered a cry of triumph. It

was the opium which Pak Ardjan had tried to hide just before his house was searched. "You lie, you scoundrel!" roared he, to the wretched Javanese, as he dealt him a blow in the face with the back of his hand, which made the blood to spurt from his lips.

But the latter replied not a word.

When the captured opium had been duly examined by the witnesses, the detected criminal was flung into a filthy sedan-chair carried by some natives who had been pressed for that service. Thus under proper escort and guard, Pak Ardjan was conveyed to Santjoemeh, and lodged in the jail.

A few days later Resident van Gulpendam laid a formal charge against Pak Ardjan before the court at Santjoemeh. He was accused of opium-smuggling, and of having violently, and with arms in his hands, resisted the police in the execution of their duty; one of the officers having received serious wounds in the affray.

Mr. Zuidhoorn, the President, read over the charge, and as he read he could not conceal a bitter smile. "It is disgusting," muttered he, "disgusting!"

CHAPTER IX.

NJONJA MAHAL—THE THREE FRIENDS.

WHEN Lim Yang Bing informed his son of the arrest of his accuser Pak Ardjan, and communicated to him some of the details of the capture, Lim Ho chuckled with delight. "That's one good riddance, at all events," quoth he, to himself. "Now, with a very little management on our part, that fellow will be found guilty and sent to the devil long before his son's smuggling case can come on at all. The most dangerous witness will then be out of the way."

Then, for a while, Lim Ho seemed lost in thought. He had made the njonja of the Resident a very handsome and valuable present of jewelry, in return for which he had got nothing but a mere empty promise that she would see what she could do for him in the way of inducing the girl to listen to his proposals. "Indeed! njonja mahal, an expensive lady," he muttered. "By Kong, what will be her price if I should need her active help in the case of the girl's refusal? Mercy on me! that will cost a pretty penny."

But Pak Ardjan's arrest gave another direction to his thoughts.

"No, the girl is not to be won, of that I am certain, she hates me too much to consent. But that is precisely the thing which makes her so attractive to me. She is an elegant, pretty girl! That's true enough, but there are many other good-looking maidens in the dessas—That's tame, I know all about them. No, no, to make the rebellious hussy bend to my will; to cover her, who detests me, with my kisses; to have her, who despises me, in my arms; and then—yes, then, when I am tired of her, and she is soiled and faded body and soul—then to be able to trample upon her, and fling her from me. That, look you, is the highly flavoured dish which, in my pursuit of her, I intend to enjoy. And, by Kong, I shall have my way, too. How? that I don't know, just yet. By force or by cunning? that matters little—if needs be, by both!"

Thus he muttered to himself as, in his father's house, he lay stretched out on a most luxurious divan, with his long Chinese pipe in his mouth, in which he was smoking the most fragrant tobacco the Celestial empire produces.

"By cunning?" he continued, after a fews puffs at his pipe, "by cunning? Now, what is the most serious obstacle? The girl's will, no doubt;—well, I shall know how to get over that, if I get the chance, that will have, I daresay, to be a matter of violence after all. Now what else is there? The njonja!—The baboe is in her service; but I think she will help me, especially if—" Here the wretch moved his hand in the manner so peculiar to the Chinese, when they count money, putting down at each gesture a little pile of coins, which always contains the exact number required, never one piece more or less. "Now, is there any one else in my way? Yes, there is Ardjan, who wants to marry her; but he is pretty well accounted for, he is safe enough in jail, and won't very easily get out of the mess he is in, as he is charged with having smuggled a couple of pikols of opium. Long before he has been condemned, and has served his time, the deed must be done. Yes, long before that Dalima must have been mine! What, then—why, then? I sha'n't give either of them another thought, then the question will be, what pretty one will next take my fancy,—from Ardjan, I have nothing to fear, even if he does escape punishment, the company will know how to deal with him. There is only one man left against whom I must be on my guard, that is Setrosmito, Dalima's father. Oh, that cursed Javanese, he threatened me with his kris, did he? When I offered him five hundred rix-dollars for his daughter! Oh, I will pay him out for that. But how?—A thought strikes me—That arrest of Pak Ardjan seems to have been the easiest matter in the world. If Setrosmito could be made to fall into the same trap—if we could secure him—were it but for a few weeks!"

Springing up from his couch, Lim Ho ran to a small gong which stood by a pillar, supported on a very elegant foot of china, and with a small stick, which was carved in the shape of a crocodile's head, the emblem of Ngoh, the water-god, he struck two sharp blows upon the clear-toned metal.

A gaudily dressed Javanese servant immediately made his appearance, walked up to the divan, and, squatting down before it, placed his hands to his forehead, and obsequiously made his "sembah."

"Do you think, Drono," asked Lim Ho, "that Singomengolo is still at Santjoemeh?"

"I saw him only this morning, babah," replied Drono, as he repeated his sembah.

"Then run and fetch him at once," said his master. "You will find him, I have no doubt, somewhere about the opium-store. Tell him I want to speak to him. Make haste!"

"Sajah babah," said the man, as he glided back a few paces, then rose, and with his face still turned to his master, made his way out of the room.

"Yes," continued Lim Ho to himself, pursuing the thoughts which the entrance of the servant had interrupted. "Yes, if it were but for a few weeks, in that time, I have no doubt, I could find some means of enticing little Dalima. The njonja Resident might be most useful to me in this. But it will cost money! No matter, there is no lack of that!"

He rose again and struck the gong, and another Javanese servant presented himself.

"Has Drono gone yet?" asked Lim Ho.

"Not yet, babah," was the man's reply, "but he is just about to start."

"Very well, then run and call him back," ordered Lim Ho.

A moment later Lim Ho's confidential servant again stood before him.

"Before you go to look for Singo," said the master, "you must go to the house of M‘Bok Kârijâh, and you must tell her that I want to see her here as soon as possible."

"Saja-babah," said Drono, as again he made the sembah.

"Yes," cried Lim Ho, impatiently, "but be off at once. Saja-babah."

The next day, M‘Bok Kârijâh entered the Residence, and asked to see the njonja besar, or great lady. She was admitted at once, for it was morning, and Laurentia had just finished attending to her household duties, and had given out all that was needful to the cook. She was at that moment engaged in changing her morning kabaai for another one, made of fine lawn trimmed with lace. Indeed, the lady's doors were never closed to the old quack, and she would always receive her, at any hour of the day, if she could possibly do so.

"Good morning, njoonjaa," said the old woman, in that drawling tone so peculiar to the obsequious Javanese, while she squatted down at the European lady's feet.

"Tabeh nènèh," replied Laurentia.

"Did the obat have the desired effect?" began the old hag.

"Oh yes," replied Laurentia; "it worked admirably, you must let me have a good supply of it."

"That is what I intended to do, njonja, but the ingredients, you know, are so difficult to get, they are so expensive."

Laurentia took a small purse from her work-basket, and put a couple of rix-dollars into the old woman's hand.

"There," said she, "take that to buy them, and mind you let me have some soon."

The crone took the money, and tied it up in the corner of a dirty handkerchief, from which a bunch of keys was dangling, and, with a cunning leer, she assured the lady that she would have no reason to complain.

Then she began to talk about master Leo, and to tell Laurentia what a dear, clever little chap he was, and how everyone in the street turned back to look at the little fellow as he passed. No doubt, now and then, an eye might be cast on the baboe also who had charge of him; for, there could be no question about it, the baboe was exceedingly pretty. Really, the njonja ought not to allow such a girl to go about so freely; she was too good-looking, and there are always people wicked enough to take advantage of innocence. The njonja knew that well enough, and it would be such a pity if the poor girl should get into bad hands. There was so much money to be made out of her. So the old hag rattled on; and so, in a disjointed way, and by degrees, she told Laurentia that Lim Ho's passion for Dalima was daily increasing in violence, and that every day he was prepared to make greater sacrifices to gain possession of her. Then Laurentia's greedy eye began to glisten, and cunning old M‘Bok was clever enough to see that she might safely venture.

Bending forward, but still keeping her watchful eye fixed on Laurentia's face, she went on for some time speaking in whispers, and seemed to be arousing the lady's keenest attention; for evidently Laurentia did not lose a word, and frequently nodded in token of assent. When the nènèh had finished speaking, Mrs. van Gulpendam did not at once reply, but, for awhile, seemed lost in meditation. At length she said:

"Boleh; tapeh—mentega sama ikan."

At the first word, "Boleh," which signifies "it is possible, it might be done," the dull eye of the old hag brightened; but, at the remainder of the sentence, she looked up with genuine surprise.

Yes, the purely idiomatic Dutch expression, though rendered most correctly in Malay, was beyond her.

"Mentega sama ikan?" she asked, in a strangely puzzled tone of voice.

"To be sure," repeated Laurentia, in Malay. "Sauce with the fish. Don't you understand me, nènèh? Cash down, I mean, M‘Bok, cash down! I am not going to be taken in by empty promises."

"Alas!" sighed the old woman, who now saw clearly enough what was meant by "Sauce with the fish." She drew a little box out of the folds of the sash which confined the sarong around her scraggy hips, and offered it to the njonja. It contained a pair of valuable golden ear-rings of Chinese workmanship, richly set with diamonds.

"Is that all?" asked Mrs. van Gulpendam, with a contemptuous smile.

"They are very valuable," muttered the old hag.

But the Resident's wife slowly shook her head.

"Lim Ho asked me," continued M‘Bok, "to tell you that he intends to come and personally express his gratitude to you as soon as the affair has succeeded."

Laurentia laughed, "When the affair has succeeded," she repeated, scornfully. "A pretty story, indeed! No, I don't intend to see the babah at all."

"But, njonja—"

"That will do," said Laurentia; "not another word about it. Come," continued she, "you may take those things away with you again."

"But what then am I to tell Lim Ho?" asked the nènèh.

"You may tell him just whatever you like, nèh."

"But, njonja—"

"Now, M'Bok," said Laurentia, resolutely, "not another word on that subject. Don't forget to bring me a good supply of the obat."

"Has the njonja no other orders for me?"

"None at present," was the answer.

"I only wished to tell you that I have another little lot of jewellery at home," insisted the old hag; "ear-rings, rings—!"

"No, no, nèh," said Laurentia, interrupting her; "but if you should happen to know of some bracelets."

"Bracelets, njonja? of what kind?"

"Golden ones, of course," replied Mrs. van Gulpendam. "A little while ago I saw some that I should very much like to have; the Chinese major's daughter was wearing them. They were beauties, serpents of old gold which went three or four times round the wrist and they had eyes of brilliants and in their mouth was a rose-coloured diamond as thick as that, look!" And the njonja at these words held up her little finger.

Old M'Bok Kârijâh devoured, so to speak, the words which she heard.

"If," continued the njonja, "you could find me such a pair of bracelets, I should think them well worth having and—there might be a little profit for you too."

These words were uttered in the most careless manner possible, though Laurentia's eyes seemed to pierce the old woman as she spoke them.

"Saja, njonja," replied M'Bok, scrambling to her feet; "Good morning, njonja."

"Good morning, nèh," said the lady.

Half an hour after this interview Lim Ho uttered a frightful curse as again and again he repeated the words, "An expensive lady!"

But he was too much intent upon his purpose to hesitate and so next day he handed M'Bok the bracelets for which she had asked him.

Before proceeding further with our story, we shall have to give the reader some information concerning Mr. van Nerekool, the young lawyer to whom Anna van Gulpendam had appealed for help in her anxiety to save Ardjan, the future husband of her favourite servant Dalima. Hitherto the narrative has carried us away, now it is time to cast a look backward.

Charles van Nerekool was, as we have seen, a fine tall young man of about five or six-and-twenty years of age, with handsome clearly cut features, a light beard and moustache and thick curly hair of a somewhat darker shade. He had studied at Leyden, the Athens of Holland. But though he had passed all his examinations most creditably, yet, he could not help confessing to himself that he had not altogether done justice to his great abilities. Both at the Grammar School and at the University he had passed for a somewhat absent and careless fellow in his studies. He had, from his early youth, been too much inclined to waste his time on objectless hobbies; but they were hobbies which showed that his mind was one of no ordinary stamp. Mighty fond was he, when a boy, of all kinds of things which lay outside the regular routine of his school duties. First and foremost, he loved music, then drawing, painting, in fact, the general contemplation of nature. Consequently, he had frequently been kept in for neglecting his lessons; but the boy did not much mind that; and on such occasions he would go away into a corner of the schoolroom and sit and dream. Then, as he sat there all alone with his fair head turned upward to the clear blue sky, some one would say, "Poor child, he is not long for this world, it will end in consumption." But Charles van Nerekool was not at all consumptive; for it happened with him, as with so many other seemingly delicate boys, that the approach of manhood brought with it robust health. When quite a child he had had the misfortune to lose his father. Spiteful tattling people, such persons as are always most anxious about things which in no way concern them, would have it that that father had never existed, or to speak more correctly, would have it that it was never known who was that father. What reason had they for flinging about these suspicions? Why? none at all. It was all the merest tittle-tattle, the merest putting together of trifling circumstances. Even at the name van Nerekool the busybodies would shake their heads and suggest that it ought to be read backwards, van Lookeren. But true or false, it mattered very little. In these days, a man can earn respect by his ability and his honesty; and where these are present, he will be highly valued in the world—in the world, that is to say, of people whose esteem is worth having. His mother was supposed to be in very easy circumstances and to enjoy a very sufficient income. At all events, the young man's studies had always been amply provided for, and his allowance at Leyden had been liberal enough to enable him to take part in all the amusements in which his fellow students used to indulge. But when, towards the end of the young man's time at college, Mrs. van Nerekool died somewhat suddenly, it appeared that in reality her means were most slender; and that she had indeed realised all the property she possessed and denied herself everything in order to be able to defray the expenses of her son's education. Seeing this, the trustee who undertook the settlement of Mrs. van Nerekool's affairs, strongly advised the young man to try and get appointed to the judicial staff in Dutch India. This advice young van Nerekool took. The short time which he had yet to spend at the University he employed in the closest application to his studies, and after having passed a brilliant examination, he was appointed to a place in India and put under the orders of the Governor General.

When he got out to Batavia, they kept him for a year in the capital to help the members of the high court of Justice to get through arrears of work which had accumulated. This year was by no means time lost; for young van Nerekool thus got a much clearer insight in all legal matters which concerned the natives of the island than he could otherwise have done, seeing that the revision of all sentences passed by the courts in Java and Madura had to go through his hands.

Shortly after, he was appointed member of the Council at Santjoemeh, which appointment gave him further opportunity of gaining useful information. At Santjoemeh, the young man had the good fortune to find in Mr. Zuidhoorn, the president of the Council, a thoroughly worthy and honest man, who proved himself a trustworthy guide, and who, fully appreciating the abilities and sterling qualities of his young colleague, took every opportunity of developing them in the right direction. In Mr. Zuidhoorn he had before him a living example of strict integrity and of that impartiality and freedom from prejudice which it is not always easy to practise in the service of dame Justitia.

At Santjoemeh van Nerekool made the acquaintance of two men, one of whom was about his own age and the other four

or five years his junior. The names of these gentlemen were William Verstork and Edward van Rheijn. Both were in the government service in the Residence of Santjoemeh; but Verstork was obliged to live at Banjoe Pahit, which was the chief dessa of the division of that name to which Kaligaweh also belonged, and van Rheijn was serving his probation in the capital and in the office of the Resident. They were both fine honest fellows quite unspoiled by Indian intrigue and corruption and who held every evasion of the truth in abhorrence. In the main point therefore their dispositions harmonised admirably with the frank nature of Charles van Nerekool, yet were their characters somewhat different from his. Mr. Verstork was, probably in consequence of his longer stay in India and his greater experience, of a much more pliable disposition than his friend; and though himself incapable of anything mean or underhand, yet to a certain extent, he was inclined to give way to his superiors and to wink at, or close his eyes to, transactions of theirs which would not bear the strictest scrutiny. This he was compelled to do, he said, in order not to spoil his career. This pliability of character frequently used to involve him in warm disputes with his two friends, in which, however, he would not try to justify himself, but used to palliate his conduct by appealing to the exceptional circumstances in which he was placed and which were indeed of sufficiently trying a nature to give him a claim to indulgence. He also had, at an early age, lost his father; but less fortunate than van Nerekool, he was left as the eldest son of a large and needy family; and though his mother had heroically striven to provide for the wants of herself and children, yet her earnings were not by any means sufficient even partially to attain that object. Moreover at the time of old Mr. Verstork's death two of William's younger brothers were receiving their education in Europe, and the studies of these young people could not be interrupted without altogether marring their prospects of future success. Thus it came to pass that Controller Verstork had a very heavy burden of care resting upon him, since the future of that family, of which he was in reality the bread-winner, depended entirely on the career he might make. If, therefore, he could now and then be accused of lukewarmness, or if for the shortcomings of others he was too ready to find extenuating circumstances or excuses, the difficult position in which he was placed ought to be fairly considered. As far as he himself was concerned he always was in word and deed scrupulously just and honest, and the future will show that, in cases of emergency, he could play his part with manliness and vigour.

Edward van Rheijn, the probationary-controller, was not of so yielding a nature, lukewarmness was not one of his faults. He was, indeed, as yet too young to have acquired Verstork's circumspection and prudence; but in the office of Mr. van Gulpendam, under whose immediate orders he had been placed, he was in a terrible school and he had every opportunity to become, according to the latter's favourite expression, "a thoroughly useful and efficient Indian functionary."

These three men, then, were friends in every sense of the word, and they never neglected a single opportunity of enjoying each other's society. Charles and Edward had, of course, constant chances of meeting since they both lived at Santjoemeh. They might, indeed be called inseparables. It was not so, however, with Verstork, whose station, the dessa Banjoe Pahit was quite twelve miles from the Residence; and for whom, therefore, there could be no question of daily intercourse with his two friends. Every Saturday afternoon when his work was over and he had closed his office, he used to jump on his horse and ride off at full speed to Santjoemeh where he was wont to lodge with one of his friends. The Saturday evening he used to spend at the "Harmonie" and listen to the excellent music of the militia band. On Sunday he was accustomed to pay some visits, and, of course, to call upon his chief officer, the Resident, and on Monday morning he was off again before daylight so as to be able to take his bath and have his breakfast and to be in his office punctually at nine o'clock. The two inseparables generally accompanied him wherever they could, but the Sunday evenings were specially devoted to friendly intercourse and conversation. These they invariably used to spend together either at van Nerekool's house or at van Rheijn's.

On one of these occasions, Charles had told his friends how that, on one of his visits to the van Gulpendams he had been introduced to the Resident's daughter Anna, how he had cultivated that young lady's acquaintance whenever he had met her at the "Harmonie," at evening parties, or at the Residence itself; and he further confessed that Miss Anna van Gulpendam appeared to him the most amiable and accomplished girl he had ever in his life had the pleasure of meeting.

"Indeed," he had continued to say, "I do not exactly know what my sentiments are. Is it a mere friendly feeling towards a pretty and accomplished child, or is it perhaps love which is beginning to nestle in my heart? I am so utterly inexperienced in such matters that I cannot tell; all I know is that I am never so happy as when I am in her company."

"And you manage to be so pretty frequently?" said van Rheijn with a malicious smile. "For some time," he continued to Verstork, "friend Charles has been away from home almost constantly. I really see very little of him, he is out almost every evening, and then you are sure to find him wherever Miss Anna and her parents happen to be, or else at the Residence whether it happens to be a reception night or not. You know I am half beginning to suspect him of taking a hand at the Residential card-table. I have several times strolled round the house trying to find out something; but the place is so closely hedged in by flowers and shrubs, that my curiosity has never once been rewarded and I have not been able to get at the secret at all."

William Verstork shook his head doubtfully at this communication, "Is there any truth in all that?" he asked, as he stedfastly kept his eye on van Nerekool.

"Oh yes," said the latter without the least hesitation, "but yet—"

"It is a very sad thing," said Verstork, interrupting him.

"A sad thing?" asked Charles, somewhat hastily, "what do you mean? you won't allow me to finish what I have to say."

"Very well," said Verstork, "say on."

Van Nerekool then went on to tell him how very powerfully he had felt himself attracted to the young girl; but that hitherto he had not allowed a single word to betray his feelings. What had passed between them was mere conversation, in which he had indeed discovered how fresh and ingenuous the young girl was; but which had never gone further than the merest every-day talk, and had entirely been confined to little compliments, and to those harmless encounters of wit in which young people who are fairly gifted, and are not particularly anxious to hide their light under a bushel, are wont to indulge. He was absolutely certain that Anna was wholly unconscious of what was passing in his bosom. But he continued to tell his friends, that on a certain evening, it was getting rather late, a Javanese servant had brought him a note in which dear little Anna had begged him to come at once and see her at the Residence.

William Verstork could not help smiling at this communication.

"Pray don't laugh," cried Charles gravely, "although I cannot help confessing that very strange thoughts forced themselves upon me also. It was so strange, was it not? So wholly contrary to the usages of society that a young girl should write such a letter at such a time. At the time I could only look upon it as an étourderie, a thoughtless action; but I am glad to tell you I soon found out my mistake. The dear girl saw me appear at her father's house without showing the slightest symptom of confusion, and soon convinced me that she had excellent reasons for her seemingly strange conduct. As it was not at all an unusual thing for me to accompany her, it could not awaken any one's suspicion, that we took our places at the piano in the brilliantly lighted inner gallery. Then I learnt why Anna had thus strangely summoned me. She wished to invoke my assistance for a certain Javanese, who is the lover and is to be the future husband of her baboe; and who now lies under a charge of opium-smuggling."

Thereupon van Nerekool told his friends all he had heard from Anna, about Ardjan's ill-treatment, and about the opium discovered at the Moeara Tjatjing.

When he had finished speaking, William Verstork again said feelingly: "It is very sad!"

"Yes, it is very sad," rejoined Charles, totally misunderstanding the meaning of his friend's words. "But I hope the Javanese will not be found guilty."

"And," asked Verstork deliberately, "And—your affection for this girl is, you say, very strong?"

"Well," resumed van Nerekool, "since that evening I have, as Edward has told you, had frequent opportunities of meeting my dear Anna, sometimes at the Zuidhoorns', sometimes at the Commandant's, and sometimes at her parents' house; and I have had frequent conversations with her on the subject of this unfortunate police-case. And every time I have seen her I have received stronger and stronger proofs—"

"Of the innocence of the Javanese, I suppose!" said van Rheijn, somewhat playfully.

"No, not so," said van Nerekool, "but of the goodness of her heart, of the true nobility of her soul and of the honesty and purity of her character. And—my dear old friends, I must confess it, I am now entirely under her spell."

"It is a very sad thing," said Verstork most seriously.

"But what the deuce do you mean—'by your very sad thing?'" cried Charles, somewhat out of patience.

"Your affection for her, my dearest friend," said the other; "you are laying up for yourself a very sad future."

"But how so?" cried Charles.

"My dear friend," said Verstork, "I ask you to give me a week to answer that question."

"Why," cried van Nerekool, "you talk as if you had to pronounce a sentence. Come, there's a good fellow, out with it at once."

"Next Saturday," said Verstork, "I intend to come again to Santjoemeh and, take my word for it, then I will give you an answer."

Whatever efforts van Nerekool might make, he could make nothing more out of the mysterious controller, and he had to rest content with the promise of a full explanation on the next Saturday.

CHAPTER X.

UNE INVITATION À LA CHASSE ET UNE INVITATION À LA VALSE.

WILLIAM VERSTORK was destined to keep his appointment with his friends; but it was not at all in the way he intended. When he promised to meet them he thought that he would, as usual, ride over to Santjoemeh on the Saturday afternoon and stay until Monday morning. It was, however, not to be so. On Thursday morning Charles van Nerekool and Edward van Rheijn received a letter inviting them to go to Banjoe Pahit.

"That will be," wrote Verstork to his two friends, "a complete change of parts. Hitherto I have been your guest, but now I insist upon appearing in the character of host. Of host!—surely my pen must be playing tricks with me. Yes, indeed, for in order to play the host, one must be able to show hospitality—no, no—hospitality is not the right word; but in order to play the host one must be able to provide for one's friends; and though I know well enough that you would not at all object to put up with my poor controller's lodging and with my still more humble dish of rice—yet I do not intend to offer you such meagre fare. Where I shall stow you away I really don't know, nor can I tell where you will find your entertainment. There's a fine invitation! I hear you exclaim. Yet, my dear friends, I feel quite certain that you will accept it. Just hear what I have to say. For some time past the maize fields of the inhabitants of my division, have been ravaged by wild boars, these have, in fact, of late become a real plague; and the dessa Kaligaweh is the principal scene of their nightly depredations. The main body of these formidable poachers finds, I am told, a refuge in the wild bush which surrounds the Djoerang (ravine) Pringapoes. This djoerang is a wild mountain cleft, and is situated very nearly in the centre of my division; the two dessas Banjoe Pahit and Kaligaweh, which are about five miles apart, lie on the outskirts of it; the one in the hilly country and the other in the lower grounds sloping down to the sea-shore. I have made up my mind to clear my district, as far as I can, of these mischievous creatures, and, for that purpose, I intend next Saturday and Sunday to hold a battue. I cannot possibly take any other days for it, as I cannot, at any other time, be away from my office. You see, therefore, my dear friends, that my letter to you is 'Une invitation à la chasse,' and that kind of thing, I know, you will not refuse. On Saturday morning I will send you a couple of first-rate horses which the wendono has offered me for the use of such of my friends as may like to join in the sport. I suppose that you will, both of you, be able to knock off work at about two o'clock; you will then want an hour to have a bath and to get your shooting-coats on. Pray don't forget a pair of tall gaiters, which in our rough country and among our thorny bushes, you will find absolutely necessary. So that, say at three o'clock, you can be in the saddle. If you will only give your horses their heads I know they will easily carry you six miles an hour, so that at about five o'clock you will be at my house. That is agreed upon, is it not?"

"Certainly, by all means," cried Charles and Edward both together, as if they wished to convey their acceptance of his invitation to the writer at Banjoe Pahit.

Said van Nerekool: "I must go and have a look at my gun, and I should think it would be well to take a couple of revolvers."

"Of course," said van Rheijn, "William says so in his letter.

Just hear what he goes on to say. 'Look well to your firearms, and see that they are in good order, for I can tell you that these pigs, when they are roused from their lair, are not by any means contemptible foes. You must, beside your guns, bring revolvers or, at least, a good hunting-knife, one you can fix on the end of your rifle, as a sword-bayonet.'"

"The devil we must!" said van Nerekool, "where in the world must I get all these things from? I shall have to try and borrow them somewhere I suppose. I have got a pretty good shot-gun of my own, but I can't fix a bayonet to it. I don't think it is much use except for shooting rice-birds, or sparrows. I must somehow manage to get hold of a rifle."

"Well," said van Rheijn, "the Regent of Santjoemeh, Radhen Mas Toemenggoeng Pringgoe Kesœmsœ has, I know, a splendid repeating rifle and a yatagan, and the Vice Regent has a pair of excellent Le Faucheux central-fire revolvers. I have no doubt they will gladly lend them to you."

"Then the best thing for me to do is to go and pay a visit at the Regent's house," said van Nerekool.

"There is no need whatever to do that," said van Rheijn. "There is to be a grand reception and ball at the Residence to-night. On such an occasion those native grandees are not at all likely to be absent. You will be there, I presume?" he continued, with a very meaning smile.

"Certainly," cried van Nerekool, with much warmth, "do you think I would—?"

"Lose an opportunity of a dance with pretty Miss Anna?" asked van Rheijn, finishing the sentence for him. "Well, you can at the same time ask for the loan of the weapons, that will save you a tedious call upon those Javanese worthies. But—"

"Well, but—what?" asked van Nerekool, "what do you mean?"

"Do you know how to handle a rifle?"

"Oh, you need not trouble yourself about that," replied van Nerekool, "I was always practising shooting at Leyden, and they used to consider me a very good shot, too."

That evening the Residence at Santjoemeh was most brilliantly illuminated. In the spacious outer gallery, in the inner gallery, in the pandoppo, in the side-rooms, in fact on all sides, rich chandeliers were glittering in the stately mansion. The innumerable jets of gas surrounded by globes of ground glass cast a bright, yet pleasantly softened light over the handsome apartments, and even over such parts of the garden as immediately surrounded the house. But there, amidst the shrubs and flowers, the gaslight had to compete with the brightly shining moon, a competition in which man's invention could not hope to gain the advantage. The Queen of Night was casting over everything her placid white light; houses, roads, grassy lawns, shrubs and flowers lay bathed in her radiance; and wherever her beams glided through the branches they shed a dim, uncertain twilight, which was gentle as a caress, and mysterious as the vision of a dream. The glare of the gas, on the other hand, surrounded the building as with a reddish circle, in which, it is true, everything was brilliantly lighted, but in which every object seemed touched, as it were, with an unclean finger, when compared with the lily white hue of the natural illumination outside. This reddish circle grew fainter and fainter as it spread farther from its centre. For some little distance the gaslight seemed to soil the absolute purity of the moonbeams; but gradually their lily-white prevailed, and calmly rested upon the landscape beyond. In front of the house there was a splendid avenue of Kanarie trees which led from the domain to Santjoemeh. At that hour of night, when seen from the front gallery, the gas-jets, by which the avenue was partially lighted, looked in the moonlight which fell through the tufted trees, like so many big fire-flies, and, in the soft breeze which barely moved the foliage, they threw on the well-kept gravel path, the most fantastic shapes which seemed to run after each other in perpetual chase.

In the far distance more fire-flies were seen, red, green, blue, yellow, all the colours of the rainbow, in fact. These were the carriage-lamps of those who were coming to attend the reception and ball, and who thus, by different coloured lamps, gave notice of their approach.

The front gallery was as yet empty, only the daughter of the house stood for a few moments at the balustrade looking down the whole length of the avenue.

Said she to herself: "Yon red light which glitters so brightly is the carriage of the assistant-resident of police, he always has the right of precedence. And that blue one is Mr. Zuidhoorn's, and that violet—Ah, there right away in the distance, that green—I must be off—the foremost carriage is almost in the grounds—However, I am glad van Nerekool is coming—It would never do for him to see me looking out." She turned and joined her parents, who, having been told by the Chief Constable that the guests were approaching, had entered the inner gallery. Anna took her place by the side of her mother ready to receive and to return the greetings of the visitors. Mr. van Gulpendam, however, first went to have a look in the front gallery. He was dressed very simply in black evening coat without any official badge or distinction whatever, though the pajoeng stand figured conspicuously enough at the end of the gallery. He walked to the balustrade and cast a look outside. Down below at the foot of the broad flight of steps which on both sides gave access to the front gallery, a couple of sentinels were marching up and down with shouldered arms. They regulated their walk, so that they met in front of the middle of the gallery, then, in turning round they took care that the tips of their bayonets should just clash together, a sound which evidently was as sweet as heavenly music in the Resident's ears. At all events he looked down with much complacency upon the two sentinels and thrust forward his chest as one who would say: "Look, that is the homage due to my exalted rank and transcendent merit."

Close by the main building, but a little on one side of it, a small temporary pavilion had been erected, and upon it also the Resident bestowed a look. The bandsmen of the militia at Santjoemeh, dressed in full uniform, had just arrived, and were engaged there in arranging their desks and opening their music-books and making other preparations. A condescending nod to the bandmaster showed that Mr. van Gulpendam was in an excellent humour. Thereupon he turned and joined his wife and daughter.

"Those fellows," said he, "don't seem to drive very fast, however, they are heaving in sight now."

Fair Laurentia, proud as any queen, had taken up her position in the middle of the inner gallery, in front of a sofa which had been placed there on purpose before a valuable Japanese screen. She held in one hand a splendid bouquet of the rarest flowers, while from the wrist of the other dangled her curiously carved ivory fan, a weapon which the lady knew how to handle most becomingly. She was clad sumptuously in a black satin dress, which set off wonderfully well the perfection of her ample form. The corsage, reduced to the very limits modesty would allow, that is to say that it was sleeveless and cut down very deep in the back and very low in front, gave an ample view of her finely formed and well rounded arms, of her splendid shoulders which looked as if carved out of alabaster, and of a bosom which might have moved Venus Kallipyga to envy. One line lower, and that corsage would not have been able to contain the charms which it had to confine within almost too narrow compass. An exceedingly elaborate coiffure sustained the dark-brown locks of her stately head by means of a magnificent diadem glowing with precious stones, while a number of coquettish little curls straying over her clear white forehead, imparted to the sparkling dark eyes of the beautiful woman an uncommonly seductive fire. Round her neck she wore the blood-coral necklace with diamond clasps which M'Bok Kârjâh had handed to her, and on her wrists glittered the two serpent bracelets of old gold with diamond eyes which she had so greatly admired on the nonna of the Chinese major, and which had wrung from Lim Ho an imprecation accompanied by the words, "Betoel, njonja mahal!"

By her side stood her daughter Anna, who by the absolute simplicity of her attire, formed the strangest possible contrast with her mother. However much Laurentia had tried, nothing would induce Anna to appear in a low-necked dress. Her corsage, which like the dress was of rose-coloured silk, was modestly closed around the neck, yet did not prevent the imagination from picturing to itself the treasures which it modelled with perfect exactness. For jewellery of any kind, the pretty girl had a positive distaste. One simple Malmaison rose glowed in her dark glossy hair, which was dressed as plainly as possible, but the wealth of which she was not able to conceal. On her bosom a little bud of tea-rose attracted attention to its delicately shaded yellow tints, while it dispersed thoughts which, at that modestly veiled yet finely modelled bust, might perhaps be tempted to take too wild a flight.

"How absurd of you it is, Anna," said Mrs. van Gulpendam, crossly enough, as she surveyed her daughter from head to foot with a sarcastic smile, "to appear at an evening party so shabbily dressed as that! Why, your late governess used to make a better figure. People would take *her* for the daughter of the house, and you for the governess."

In a certain sense the worldly woman was right enough. The late governess she alluded to was a frivolous Parisienne, who had in every way encouraged Mrs. van Gulpendam in her tastes, and had even urged her on to greater extravagance. Thus she had got into the good graces of the mistress of the house, and—evil tongues used to whisper—she stood very high in favour with the Resident also. But be this true or false, this much is certain that Mademoiselle Hélène Fouillée had no more succeeded in corrupting the mind of the young girl entrusted to her care, than in spoiling her naturally excellent taste. It was not Anna's intention to reply to her mother's ill natured remark, even had she had time to do so. At that moment was heard the sound of feet mounting the broad steps which led to the front gallery, and in a few seconds, in came a number of young gentlemen of different races, some with white cheeks, some with brown, some with fair hair, and some with black locks heavily oiled and stiff as pipe stems, all in correct evening dress, with the starchiest collars, and with opera-hats under their arms. These were, as Mr. van Gulpendam used to style them, the ordinary seamen of the feast, who had to keep up the liveliness of the mess; and who were expected to stand always ready by the signal halliards. With this peculiar figurative language he meant to convey that these young gentlemen were expected to hold themselves in readiness for any emergency. Most of them were clerks and writers in the Resident's office, who were admitted on these high occasions on condition that they were always prepared to dance with any lady who might happen to be in want of a partner.

Very humbly and very modestly they approached to pay their respectful compliments to the family. In return for this homage they obtained a condescending shake of the hand from their chief, a pleasant little smile and nod from his pretty daughter, while mamma, with her own fair fingers, fastened a rosebud in their buttonholes, thus dubbing them the stewards of the evening's entertainment.

"And now, young people," said Laurentia, with her most fascinating smile, "you must dance merrily to-night."

"Aye, aye," grumbled van Gulpendam, "a good stiff breeze mind—no doldrums, do you hear!"

All heads were submissively bent under this windy exhortation, when suddenly Laurentia cried:

"Quick, there come our guests!"

As a black cloud the young men rushed from the room, as the foremost carriages drove up. Presently, three of them returned to the inner gallery, escorting the wife of the assistant resident of police and her two daughters, a pair of good-looking twins of about twenty.

"Well, how very kind of you, Mrs. Meidema," cried Laurentia, in her most pleasant tones, as she grasped the hand of the lady who had just arrived and drew her close to give her a kiss on the forehead. Each of the two young girls also obtained this high distinction.

"It is really kind of you to have come," continued the garrulous hostess. "I hardly dared to hope that we should have the pleasure of seeing you here to-night. Mrs. Zuidhoorn was this morning telling me that one of your children is ill."

"Oh no, I am glad to say," replied Mrs. Meidema, "it is not so bad as that, only slightly indisposed, it is nothing but a slight cold."

The Assistant Resident who followed his ladies, made his bow to the mistress of the house, and then shook hands with his chief. As the young ladies were exchanging greetings, one of the sisters whispered to Anna van Gulpendam, "I have something to tell you presently, Anna."

"Secrets, Matilda?" asked she.

A slight nod was the answer, in fact no other reply was possible; for after the family Meidema a constant stream of visitors came up and crowded around the host and hostess to pay them their respects.

Then appeared the President of the Court, and the members of the judicature, the officials of the Home Department, the officers of the garrison, the leading commercial men and principal manufacturers—all these accompanied by the ladies of their families, whenever these were old enough to join in the dancing. There further appeared the Regent of Santjoemeh Radhen Mas Toemenggoeng Pringgoe Kesoemoe and the Vice-regent Radhen Pandjie Merto Winoto and the chief djaksa (public prosecutor) Mas Djogo Dirdjo and many other Javanese grandees and all these with their principal wives. There appeared also the major of the Chinese Tang Ing Gwan and captains, Lim Liong Hie and Tjaa Kwat Kong and several lieutenants of that nation. There also Lim Yang Bing the opium farmer at Santjoemeh and his son Lim Ho put in an appearance. All these people thronged around the three members of the Residential family as they stood by the above mentioned sofa. They all smiled and nodded, and bowed, and shook hands, and made protestations—indeed, at the Hague you could not have seen it done better. If all these utterances which spoke of attachment and devotion, were but in sober reality the outcome of hearty good will—why, then Santjoemeh would have been an earthly Paradise.

Meanwhile, the militia-band had been playing the overture of *La Dame Blanche*, to which music, however, not a single soul had paid the slightest attention.

When the overture was ended, and flattery, and incense, and compliments, had, at length, been exhausted, the Resident made a signal, which was forthwith repeated by one of the ministering spirits in the front-gallery. Straightway were heard the tones of a formal Polonaise, whereupon the assembled guests pairing off began to move about in the spacious inner and outer galleries. It was a stately procession, reminding one very much of a march-past, during which the keen eyes of the ladies could sharply criticise each other's toilettes.

The Resident led the procession with the Commandant's wife on his arm, immediately behind them, came fair Laurentia on the arm of that commanding officer, while the chief of the medical staff followed with Anna. This was a thorn in van Nerekool's side; but when, after the Polonaise, were heard the exhilarating strains of "L'invitation à la valse," the old doctor had led Anna to a seat, youth asserted its rights, and soon Anna and Charles were gliding together in the inner gallery. It was a sight, to see the two young people so happy, with pleasure beaming from their eyes.

"I believe," said Anna in a subdued voice, as she waltzed, "I believe there is some news about Ardjan."

"About Ardjan?" asked Van Nerekool, evidently perplexed. Not, indeed, the case of Anna's protégé but merely his name had escaped the young man's memory, his face told that plainly enough.

"Yes, Ardjan, don't you recollect, baboe Dalima's lover," rejoined Anna, "have you forgotten him already—Oh those men, those men!"

"I confess, it is very stupid of me," replied van Nerekool; "but what news is there, Miss van Gulpendam?"

"I don't yet know what it is, Mr. van Nerekool."

"Mr. van Nerekool!" said Charles, "that sounds remarkably stiff and formal."

"Miss van Gulpendam," said Anna playfully in the same tone, "that also sounds remarkably stiff and formal."

"Will you then give me the right to call you Miss Anna, or, shorter still—simply Anna—dear, darling Anna?"

The young girl blushed most prettily. She did not utter a word; but her hand, as it rested lightly on his shoulder, was her interpreter. The slightest little pressure, and that was all.

It was almost imperceptible, but it was enough to make Charles the happiest of mortals. His right arm encircled her waist, with his left hand he held hers, while his eye was stedfastly fixed downward on the graceful form before him.

Thus, for a few moments they glided on in silence, "I am waiting for your answer," said he at length, "dear—darling Anna. I may call you so, may I not?"

No distinctly spoken word came from her lips; but she uttered a sound, very pleasant to hear, though quite indefinite. It was a gentle breath, something like a suppressed sigh, and sounded like a veil which her maiden modesty cast over the unpronounced answer.

Yes—but—might it not have been her breathing somewhat quickened by the exertion of dancing?

With the blindness and bungling so peculiar to true lovers, Charles at once interpreted that sigh as a sign of fatigue, and somewhat anxiously he said to her:

"You are tired! shall I take you to your seat?"

"Oh no," said she in a scarcely audible whisper, "I am not at all tired. Do let us go on dancing."

However inexperienced in such matters van Nerekool might be, those words were plain enough. "With the greatest pleasure, dear Anna," he cried, as he led his partner on amid the maze of dancers.

"You give me leave then to call you dear—dearest Anna?"

One eloquent look from the fair girl was the answer.

"Oh then," continued he passionately, "let me tell you how dear you are to me, how dearly, how fondly I love you."

Her well-gloved hand moved convulsively on his shoulder.

"Yes, darling Anna," he continued in a lower tone, but more eagerly than before—"I love you as never man can have loved before,—I love you with all my heart and with all my soul, and the proudest and happiest moment of my life will be that in which I shall be able to call you mine—my own! Tell me, dearest Anna, tell me, may I hope for some return of my love?"

The girl's eye fell before his burning glance, but this was a turning point in her life, and when it was a question of such vital importance to both, she was much too frank and too honest to try and hide her feelings under a cloak of false modesty. Very softly therefore; but in a voice which to Charles was distinctly audible, she murmured, "Yes."

For a few moments he was silent, and seemed lost in thought. Gently they glided on together to the time of that delightful music, and, though in the midst of a throng of dancers, wholly engrossed in each other, they felt as lonely as on some island washed by the storm-tossed waves.

But his arm now more firmly clasped her waist, for a single instant it seemed as if he would have caught her up to his breast and held her there, as if to take possession of his treasure.

"You make me too happy," said he at length, "You make me too happy with that little word, which to me is full of the deepest meaning. Now will you allow me to see your parents to-morrow and lay before them my formal request for your hand?"

At these words the girl's countenance fell, she replied however:

"Most certainly I will allow you, Mr. van Ne——"

"My name is Charles, dearest Anna," whispered the young man.

"Certainly, Charles, I will allow you—but it would not be right to try and conceal from you the fact that my father is prejudiced against you. My father does not like you at all, I have gathered that from many an unguarded expression that has fallen from him."

"Oh, yes," he replied, "I know that well. I also have noticed his dislike. But what objection can he have to me?"

"Well," said Anna, "to tell you the truth, I do not think he knows that himself—some unaccountable antipathy, I suppose. You know he calls you a dreamer, an enthusiast, an unpractical person, in fact, who will never make much way in the world."

"And my Anna," asked the young man, "does she also look upon me as a dreamer and an enthusiast?"

The fair girl looked up to him with a merry smile.

"Yes," continued van Nerekool, "I am an enthusiast—that is quite true. I am devoted to all that is good and all that is beautiful. I am an enthusiast where my darling is concerned—that is true enough. But is it a fact that I am an unpractical fellow, and one who will never make his way in the world? Methinks that just now, when I am trying to win the dearest girl in the world, I am proving myself to be most thoroughly practical, inasmuch as I am striving to secure for myself the greatest imaginable happiness, and I think that, far from dreaming, I am giving proof of being very properly and very wide awake. Don't you think so, dearest?"

Another soft pressure on that poor shoulder which already had had so much to bear was her answer.

"And do you think, dearest Anna," he continued, "that that antipathy is strong enough to make your father so hostile to me that he will refuse his consent to a union on which he knows that your happiness as well as mine depends?"

"I do not say so, Charles," was her reply. "But you must make up your mind to difficulties and obstacles of all kinds."

"Very good," said he, "we shall have to fight against them; difficulties are made to be removed and obstacles to be overcome. Anna, my darling, I count upon your love and your constancy; you may safely count on mine. Nothing—you hear me?—nothing in the world will in the slightest degree affect my love to you. The very obstacles you speak of will only serve to enhance the joy of our union."

The music ceased, and with it ceased the dance. Charles released his partner's waist and offered her his arm.

"Let us walk about for a few minutes," said he; "to-morrow I shall call upon your parents. I will request them to see me some time in the morning. That is a settled question, is it not?"

She nodded with her calm, sweet smile.

After having made a couple of turns around the inner gallery the two lovers found themselves at one of the doors which opened upon the pandoppo, where the illumination was equally bright. Several couples—groups of young girls—also were passing through the pandoppo to get to the garden of the Residence, there to enjoy for a while the freshness and coolness of the pleasant night. Anna and Charles followed the others somewhat mechanically; and soon found themselves among the ornamental shrubberies and bushes which the tropical sun brings forth in such abundance. Between these the pathways, laid down in the style of an English park, meandered gracefully and fantastically as the inspiration of some skilful artist.

"I fancy I saw Matilda Meidema and a couple of my friends yonder just now," said Anna, "down there in the Salak-lane. She has something to tell me. I shall be with you again directly."

Was it natural modesty? Was it a kind of dread of being alone for the first time with him whom she loved, and to whom she had just now spoken her faithful and trustful "yes?" Was it perhaps womanly curiosity which impelled her to go and hear what secret her friend had to communicate, and a burning anxiety also to pour into her ear the great secret of her own happiness? Perhaps so. At all events, she was about to speed away, but van Nerekool prevented her with gentle violence as he pressed to his heart the hand which lay on his arm.

"There will be time enough presently, dearest love," murmured he in a whisper, as if he feared some one in the garden might catch up his words; "there will be time enough presently to hear what Matilda has to tell you. This hour is mine."

CHAPTER XI.

A GARDEN SCENE.

MEANWHILE, the moon had risen high in the heavens. Through the lofty tree-tops, her beams formed the most curiously shaped and fantastic silhouettes, which, under the influence of the cool night-breeze, seemed to drive one another up and down in endless chase along the bright yellow paths, and the velvety lawns. Here and there, the moonlight fell through groups of Tjemara trees, which, with their long needle-like foliage, greatly resemble our larches, and thus had, as it were, to pass through a network of the finest lace. Nothing could be more weird, and, to a poetic eye, more pleasing, than these strange patches of sifted light, which cast no shadows, and offered so great a contrast to the calm white radiance around, that they looked like the mysterious rings in which elves and fairies hold their nightly revels.

This night, however, the otherwise so quiet garden offered a most animated spectacle. On all sides, in the avenues, under the trees, on the lawns, were scattered about merry groups of young men and girls, and many more sedate parties also of older people, all thoroughly enjoying the fresh balmy air, and, after the heat and glare of the crowded ball-rooms, finding relief in the cool breeze and pleasant moonlight.

After the waltz was over, the band had struck up a fantasia on airs from *La Traviata*. As the picolo and the cornet began the well-known duet of the first act in which Alfred and Violetta declare their mutual love, and where the music so eloquently interprets the words:

"Un jour l'âme ravie,
Je vous vis si jolie,
Que je vous crus sortie
Du céleste séjour.
Etait-ce donc un ange, une femme,
Qui venait d'embraser mon âme?
Las! je ne sais encor . . . . mais depuis ce beau jour,
Je sais que j'aime d'un pur amour."

Van Nerekool's arm stole round the waist of his dear Anna, as he led her into a thick grove of Pandan, under whose heavy and broad foliage they might hope, for a few moments, to escape from the observation of those around them.

"Now, my own dearest Anna," said he, "now that we are alone, let me repeat the words which, yonder in the midst of all those people, and with all those eyes fixed upon us, I could but whisper."

The young girl hung trembling all over on her lover's arm.

"Anna, my darling, I love you; I love you more dearly than my words can express, more dearly than my mother, than my sister, more dearly than myself. As I am by your side, I can dream of nothing but happiness, to breathe the same air that you breathe is bliss indeed. O darling Anna, let me tell you again and again how dearly, how faithfully, I love you!"

The strong man clasped the girl to his breast, and she hid her head on his shoulder.

"Tell me, Anna," he continued, passionately, "tell me, do you feel some such love for me? Do you love me, dearest? I know I have already had your answer, but repeat that word once again now that we are here alone, now that we are here far from the noise of the world, repeat that little word now as we are standing under the eye of God himself."

He drew the young girl still more closely to him, as he bowed his head down to her lips to listen. She closed her eyes, and then, blending with the wondrous soughing of the breeze in the Tjemara trees, softly and melodiously the magic syllable fell from her lips.

He all but uttered a cry of joy, and, bending his head still deeper down towards her, he whispered in trembling accents, "Dearest one, now let me set the seal to my vows of true and faithful love;" and, before Anna had time to utter a word, their lips met, and then, with one long, ardent kiss, they closed the band which, for this transitory world, was to hold their hearts and lives inseparably united.

Thus for a few moments they stood in fond embrace, gazing at one another with joy ineffable, while high above them the broad Pandan-leaves were gently waving and sheltering them under their friendly shade, and the wind sighing to the Tjemaras wafted to them from yonder distance the sweet strains of melody which again and again seemed to say:

". . . . . Mais depuis ce beau jour,
Je sais que j'aime d'un pur amour."

Those brief moments of rapture were indeed, for the happy pair of lovers, an ever-memorable page in the book of their life; the fairest page, no doubt, and the happiest. Soon, too soon, they were to be roughly shaken out of their blissful dream.

"Anna!" cried a loud voice, "Matilda Meidema is looking for you everywhere. Where can you have got to, my child?"

It was the voice of Anna's mother Laurentia, which suddenly startled our lovers out of their ecstasy. At a single glance the sharp-sighted woman had taken in the whole scene; but she betrayed no surprise, and, in the most winning manner, continued: "I left Matilda, only a moment ago, by yonder bed of roses—if you will follow this path, you can't help meeting her."

And, as her daughter stood irresolute:

"Oh," said she, "you need not be anxious: Mr. van Nerekool will be kind enough to offer me his arm, so you see you will not leave him sorrowing and utterly forsaken. Make haste."

These words uttered in the most friendly tone, yet so full of sarcasm, dismayed the young girl utterly, and caused her to hurry away with sad forebodings.

"And now, Mr. van Nerekool," said Mrs. van Gulpendam, somewhat loftily, to the young man. "Now, it is our turn, will you kindly offer me your arm?"

Without a word, and with a courtly bow, van Nerekool complied; but he felt sick at heart, as though he had committed some crime.

"Come," said she, "we will walk up this avenue of Tjemaras, it is lighter here and not so mysteriously dark as in that horrid Pandan grove. True, I don't suppose you will have to tell me such pretty tales as you were just now whispering to Anna. Fie, Mr. van Nerekool, that was hardly a loyal action on your part, I must say—"

Charles cast his eye on the woman who was leaning on his arm, and who, so calmly and with so musical a voice, signified her maternal disapprobation. They had come forth from the Pandan grove, so that the moonlight, shining full upon the perfect form of her snowy bosom, which a thin tulle handkerchief only nominally protected from the night air, imparted to her person an indescribably fascinating appearance. As though dazzled at the sight, the young man, for a single instant, closed his eyes; and when he opened them again, he found the deep, dark gaze of the beautiful woman fixed full upon him. She seemed to divine the impression which the view of her charms had, for a passing moment, made upon the youthful and susceptible man. Her look seemed to interrogate, and, at the same time, was encouraging.

"Madam," said Charles at length with a deep breath, as if he were putting from him an unwelcome thought; "Madam, you were doubtless surprised to find me walking with Miss Anna in this somewhat lonely part of the garden—"

"Walking with her, yes,—and kissing her," said fair Laurentia, completing the sentence.

"Well, yes," continued Charles, "and kissing her; but should you perhaps think that we had purposely selected this spot, then—"

"Well, what then?" asked she, with a sly smile.

"Then you would be misjudging Miss Anna and myself."

"I considered," retorted Laurentia, somewhat sarcastically, "that the spot was an admirable one—well-chosen for kissing."

"Yet it was the merest chance that brought us to it. Believe me, before that moment,—or to speak more correctly,—before this evening, not a word of love had ever passed between us."

"Oh, Mr. van Nerekool!" exclaimed Laurentia, with a mocking smile, "that is quite incredible! Do you expect me to believe that two young people of different sexes, should be kissing each other in an out-of-the-way corner, if there had not previously been some words of affection,—of love,—spoken between them—without, in fact, any question of passion on either side?"

"And yet, madam, believe me, it is the perfect truth. I never tell a lie," broke in Charles, with considerable vehemence.

"Aye, aye," said Laurentia, "I know all about it. I once was young myself. Oh," continued the pleasure-loving woman, her voice falling at the remembrance of that youth from which she was so loth to part. "Oh, when I was nineteen, I was exactly what Anna is now—I was, as she is now, a budding beauty, I had just as fresh and youthful feelings—I was just as child-like and playful as she is."

Van Nerekool shuddered at this comparison of the daughter with the mother.

"I was just as kind-hearted, just as lovable as she is. Oh believe me," continued she, excitedly, while she allowed her hand to lean on his arm more heavily perhaps than was needful, and gave that arm a gentle pressure. "Believe me, one need not have a very lively imagination to see that Anna will be precisely like me."

For a moment she paused, as if she began to see that she was being carried away by her subject.

"No doubt, madam," replied van Nerekool, gallantly, as he allowed his eye to wander from the face of his fair companion to her shoulders, to her bosom, to her feet. "No doubt, one may safely predict that Miss Anna will, in charms and perfections, nearly come up to her mother."

"Pray, Mr. van Nerekool, no compliments," said Laurentia, with an affected smile.

"But may I beg of you," continued he, "to let me know for what purpose you drew the parallel? I do not quite see—"

Laurentia shook the wealth of curls which covered her neck and descended to her shoulders. No, the simpleton whose arm she held, did not understand her. That was plain enough. One thought of M'Bok Kârijâh swiftly passed through her brain, and drew a sigh from her.

"Oh," she continued, while her bosom rose and fell quickly as she drew breath more rapidly, "I merely meant to state that I was young once—"

"And you are young still," cried van Nerekool, politely.

"That a kiss has been snatched from me too," continued Laurentia, with a smile of pleasure at the remembrance, "but that occurred in open daylight, in the presence of my parents, and not in the darkness of a Pandan grove."

"Now, madam," said van Nerekool, very seriously, "allow me, I pray you, to tell you how it all happened. For about a twelvemonth I have been visiting at your house. At first my visits were but rare, of late they have become much more frequent. Now, you are a clever woman and you cannot have failed to see the reason of this. I had made the acquaintance of your daughter, and the more thoroughly I began to appreciate her amiable and noble character, the more deeply did the shaft which had struck me at my first visit, enter into my heart. How shall I go on, madam—the simple truth is that soon I felt that at her side only I could be truly happy. But; —though I ventured to hope that Miss Anna had no aversion for me—and though I thought that I might reckon upon your friendly aid also—yet I very soon began to notice that I failed to gain the good-will of Mr. van Gulpendam. Indeed, I may say, that he positively dislikes me. That feeling of dislike he could not always repress, though he observed towards me the forms of strict politeness; and, though I cannot complain of any purposely inflicted slights, yet now and then his repugnance would show itself in a manner which, to me, has been wholly unmistakable. This, in some measure, discouraged me. Then again, I know that, as yet, my income will not suffice to set up housekeeping on however modest a scale. Thus, you yourself, my dear madam, must have perceived that I left Miss Anna in utter ignorance of my affection for her. Whether or not she may have suspected my passion, I do not dare to say; but certainly I uttered no single word of love to her—"

"But Mr. van Nerekool—"

"Allow me, madam, to finish my story: certainly I uttered no single word of love to her until this evening when, in the giddy whirl of the dance, the secret which I had so long and so faithfully kept escaped me. I was beside myself with joy when the first declaration of my love was not met with a refusal. And, as a loving mother, can you now blame me because, as we were walking together a few moments later in this garden, I was driven, by the magic power of this lovely scene, by the solemn quiet of this enchanting spot, and by the seductive notes of the music which could not but find an echo in my heart, again to declare my love? Can you blame me because, as I held in my arms the pure angel of my dreams and clasped her to my heart, I sealed the solemn compact of our love with a kiss as pure and as holy—I swear it—as the angels in Heaven might interchange?"

Charles van Nerekool spoke with the fire, with the enthusiasm, of truth. His words were nothing like the commonplaces of society, nothing like the phrases which sound like a mere sentimental lesson learnt out of the romantic pages of Georges Sand, of Georges Ohnet or of Hector Malot. His words were eloquent, manly; and came from a true and loyal heart, and they made a deep impression on the fair lady who leaned on his arm. Laurentia—always very impressible—closed her eyes for a moment, as if dazed by the power and purity of his love. Had Mr. van Gulpendam ever, thought she, thus declared his love to her—had he ever spoken of her in such terms? Alas! no; he was a man wholly absorbed in the love of money; and— and— But she—she?—was she free from those faults which now she looked upon with such horror in her husband? For one single moment she was forced to confess herself guilty, for a single moment better thoughts prevailed. But this was only for a moment. The instant after she began to feel jealous of her daughter. Yes, jealous and angry at the thought that Anna has succeeded in winning so pure, so proud, so manly a love—a love which she herself had never either felt or inspired. Moreover she put no faith in so much purity and sincerity as the words of van Nerekool evidently conveyed. Her very nature forbade her to do so. All affection, all love between persons of opposite sexes was, in her estimation, the mere expression of material passion and the consequence of carnal desire. Purity and love were, to her, mere sounds, which, if she could understand them at all, only served as a cloak for far different sentiments. To her they were—they could be—nothing more. Under the influence, therefore, of such miserably grovelling views, she answered sarcastically: "Yes, I can understand all that! Immeasurable bliss under the Pandan bushes! Now, Mr. van Nerekool, shall I tell you what I think of that chaste kiss and all the rest of it?—Well, I think that they are merely fine names for something which might be expressed in totally different language. Why! you, as a man, you surely must know what meaning the world attributes to a kiss!"

"Pardon me, madam," replied Charles, somewhat sadly, I am, as yet, very young and very inexperienced."

"Yes," said Laurentia with a mocking laugh, "I can quite perceive that."

"Oh madam," cried the young man, "I beg you let us not waste time in useless playing with words. Yes I am young, I repeat it, I am inexperienced, I have but little knowledge of the sentiments which seem to pass current in the world; feelings which appear to be ticketed like the samples of some commercial traveller, each to fit into their own compartment—one affection of the heart another of the head, another of the senses. Of all this I know nothing. I can say but one thing, I truly, and in all good faith and honesty, love your daughter; and especially, my love for her is a pure love in which the pursuit after pleasure has not once entered. Believe me when I say this in all the sincerity of my heart. Such insinuations I never expected to hear from her who is the mother of her whom I honour and respect above all things. I love Anna with all my heart and with all my powers, and I feel within me the glorious strength which honourable love alone is able to impart."

These principles of the young man spoken out so forcibly and in so manly a spirit, baffled Mrs. van Gulpendam completely. She felt at once that it would be no use whatever to try and play any idle games with him.

"But," said she somewhat impatiently, "what then do you want of me?" This she asked quite forgetting that it was she who had asked van Nerekool to give her his arm, and that it was she who had brought up this conversation—a conversation which seemed to be turning greatly to her discomfiture.

"I caught you," she continued, "as you were holding Anna in your arms, in a lonely spot, and as you were pressing a kiss upon her lips. Now I ask you, what am I to think of the vaunted purity of your love? Your practice seems to me to be in direct contradiction with your fine principles. I ask you again: is such conduct in any way excusable, while the girl's parents are left in ignorance of this passion?"

"Mrs. van Gulpendam, I have tried to explain to you how circumstances entirely beyond my control, have led me to betray my feelings. If you will not take my word for it, then I can only lament that you, my dear Anna's mother, have formed so low an opinion of my character. But, much as I do regret that, such considerations can now no longer withhold me. I have agreed with Miss Anna, that to-morrow I will ask your leave to call upon you in order to formally make my request to yourself and Mr. van Gulpendam, for your daughter's hand. Now, however, let me anticipate that to-morrow and make my petition to you here which it was my intention to lay before you to-morrow. And, may I add to that request, the prayer that you will kindly intercede on my behalf, with Mr van Gulpendam?"

As he made his petition Charles van Nerekool had stopped in his walk and had dropped Laurentia's arm, and now he was looking up into the eyes of Anna's mother, with the beseeching look of yearning love.

Knowing the young man's character, it cannot for a moment be supposed that he acted with any view to theatrical effect when he stopped exactly in the centre of one of those strange

shadowy glades under the Tjemara trees. The curious light, however, surrounded his head as with a mysterious aureola which made the finely chiselled features of his grave countenance and his fair curls stand out to the greatest advantage. Fair Laurentia was an excellent judge of manly beauty; and the ardent look which she cast upon the young man, as he stood there in an attitude of supplication before her, would have filled Anna with dismay had she been able to see it and been able to understand its significance.

The momentary danger, however, fortunately passed away; for the thoughts of the practical woman were just then distracted by the approach of two sons of the Celestial empire, who, walking in an avenue which ran parallel to that in which she was, made the fine gravel crunch under their curiously curved but heavy sandals.

These were babah Tang Ing Gwan the major of the Chinese troops at Santjoemeh and babah Lim Yang Bing the opium farmer. They also had come out to enjoy the fresh air, and were honestly confessing to each other that, on the whole, they did not find much amusement in these European entertainments. Said Lim Yang Bing with a most disgusting leer to his companion, "It is only the bare shoulders, arms, &c., of the European ladies and girls that reconcile me in any way to so tedious a party. It cannot be denied that the creatures are well made. But what on earth can the husbands and fathers of these things mean, to come and exhibit them thus publicly; and then what shamelessness, what want of modesty in those white women to show themselves thus, Tjiss! Fie upon them!"

"Yes, indeed, Tjiss!" said the Chinese major, an elderly man who with his long grey moustache drooping on to his breast, had a very martial, indeed a venerable appearance. "Yes, Tjiss!" said he, "I would not allow my wife or daughters to appear before me in such dress as that, or rather in such undress!"

"Have you noticed the njonja toean Resident?" said Lim Yang Bing. "She—"

"Hold your tongue!" whispered the major in a warning voice, "she is standing just there talking to the young judge; what can she have to say to him?"

Lim Yang Bing answered not a word; but a low cunning smile played upon his lips. The intrigues of his son Lim Ho were perfectly well known to him. He also remembered his con-

versation with the Resident—and van Nerekool was a member of the judicial bench.

No! the njonja had heard nothing but the crunching of the gravel; but the mere sight of these two Chinamen—and especially the sight of the opium-farmer, which brought at once Lim Ho to her mind, and her arrangements with M'Bok Kârijâh—caused the demon of money to triumph, and put to silence all other passions in her breast.

"Mr. van Nerekool," said she in a gentle coaxing tone of voice, "the Resident is not at all so badly disposed towards you as you seem to think. But he is a man who has a great eye for all that is practical.—Allow me to speak and do not interrupt me.—Our conversation has already lasted too long. The world might, you know—But no, you love my daughter do you not?"

She hesitated—she stammered, she was trembling all over. Young van Nerekool gazed at her with a strange puzzled expression which she seemed perfectly to understand.

"The Resident," she resumed, "will have practical men and—you must pardon me," she continued with slight hesitation, "you must pardon me for saying so; but you are not a practical man. No, no," continued she hastily, "don't look at me like that! You are moving in a world of dreams, which is very far removed indeed from practical every-day life. You picture to yourself an ideal world as different as possible from the one in which we live. And, I can tell you, if you cannot somehow or other manage to wake up out of your day-dreams, you will be in great danger of never making any way at all in the judicial career which you have chosen. Yours is, in sober fact, a most prosaic career; and the one of all others, in which dreams and fancies are utterly out of place."

Van Nerekool listened to this homily with the greatest attention and most submissively, though he felt arising within him a nameless feeling of uneasiness which he had much trouble to suppress.

"I am prepared to accede to your request," resumed fair Laurentia with her most winning smile, but at the same time emphasizing every syllable as if she counted them,—"I will speak for you, and I will plead your cause with the Resident,—and if I once consent to do that, Anna will be yours."

"Oh how can I sufficiently thank you," exclaimed van Nerekool, laying his hand on his heart, as if he wished to keep down its beating.

Very little more and he would, in his transport of gratitude, have snatched up Laurentia to his breast and covered her with kisses. Happily, however, he restrained himself,—happily, for who knows what effect such an act might have had upon the excitable woman.

"Be calm, Mr. van Nerekool," said she, "be calm. I am ready to intercede for you; but then, on your part, you must make me one promise."

"Oh speak, madam, speak—I will in every way—"

"Mr. Zuidhoorn," quietly resumed Laurentia, "is, as you may have heard perhaps, on the point of starting for Holland to recruit his health—I am right, am I not?"

"Very good," she continued as Charles made a gesture of assent, "there is a case coming before the Court which I am particularly anxious to see satisfactorily settled."

"But, madam," interposed the lawyer, "I am a member of the judicial council and have nothing whatever to do with the lower court."

"At my recommendation," replied Laurentia, "you will, being one of the junior judges, be appointed President of the lower court pending the arrival of Mr. Zuidhoorn's substitute. That will be a step for you, will it not?"

"Certainly it will," said van Nerekool, "I pray you go on."

"And—who knows?—But to come to the point. There is a Javanese at present in custody whose name is Ardjan, the fellow has been smuggling opium."

Van Nerekool's heart began to throb almost audibly. Of course the mother of his dearest Anna could but wish to help this poor Ardjan out of his trouble, and was about to call upon him to lend her his assistance. He therefore thought that he quite spoke her mind when he interrupted her by saying:

"Who is accused of smuggling opium, you mean, dear madam."

"That comes to the same thing," replied Mrs. van Gulpendam somewhat tartly.

The young lawyer looked up in surprise, he could make nothing of it.

"Ardjan," continued Laurentia, again quite calmly, "is an arch-smuggler, he belongs to a family of smugglers. Just lately—a day or two ago—his father was caught in the act, and offered armed resistance to the police in the execution of their duties. Such scum as that must be severely dealt with—do you hear?"

"Yes, madam, I hear," said van Nerekool, drily, "I know that he did offer resistance to the authorities; but—as far as opium-smuggling is concerned—"

"Smuggling!" cried the lady, vehemently, "is theft—is theft! you know that well enough, Mr. van Nerekool, it is stealing from the revenue, it is stealing from the public purse."

"Most undoubtedly it is, madam; but what I wanted to ask is—Has this case of smuggling been properly brought home to them?"

"Oh, certainly it has," cried Laurentia. "Ardjan is the guilty man—there is no one else to suspect. Of course, I know well enough that a conspiracy had been formed to cast suspicion upon Lim Ho, the son of the great opium farmer. Now what an absurdity!—the son of the farmer who, with his father, has the greatest interest in stopping all smuggling transactions!—it is simply absurd. I know also that in order further to prejudice Lim Ho, an accusation has been trumped up against him in the upper court, in which he is charged with having flogged Ardjan with Kamadoog leaves. But, of course, Mr. van Nerekool, you will know how to tear to pieces that web of deceit and perjury. You will know how to deal with that nest of smugglers, and make short work of all these perjurers!"

"Madam," replied the young man, "you may be quite sure that, if I have the honour of being appointed to the temporary presidency of the lower court, I shall, to the best of my abilities, discharge my duties with the strictest impartiality. He who is in the right shall have justice; and he who is guilty, shall not evade the punishment he deserves. I happen to know something about that smuggling business, and also of the so-called resistance to the police of which Pak Ardjan stands accused, and I think I can assure you that neither father nor son is as culpable as he is supposed to be."

"What a downright simpleton the booby is," thought Mrs. van Gulpendam.

"Mr. van Nerekool," she whispered in his ear, "the Resident is quite right—You are not a practical man."

"But, madam—"

"But remember, it is only if you follow my directions, that Anna will be yours. You mind that!"

"But," cried Nerekool, in extreme perplexity, "what is it you require me to do?"

"Ardjan and his father must both be transported," said Mrs. van Gulpendam, most resolutely. "Where to?—that matters but little—to Deli, to Atjeh—Yes, Atjeh, perhaps, would be the better place."

"They will be transported," said Van Nerekool, with equal resolution, "both of them, if they are found guilty."

"Guilty or not guilty!" exclaimed Mrs. van Gulpendam, "you will do as I tell you!—Or else—no presidency—You will do as I tell you—or else, depend upon it—no Anna!"

The blood flew up into the face of the upright young judge at this intolerable dictation. His whole mind and soul rebelled against such gross injustice. He dropped the arm of the fair temptress, and, without reflecting, he hissed rather than spoke in the heat of his indignation.

"Madam, I love your daughter, I dearly love Anna; but to purchase her hand at that price—the price of my own dishonour—Never, never!"

"Never?" sneered Laurentia.

"No, madam, never, never!" exclaimed van Nerekool. "Why, she herself would be the very first to despise and reject me, could I be guilty of such baseness and accept so odious an offer. But," continued he, suddenly changing his tone, "surely all this is but a jest, surely you are not in earnest!"

"I am in right—downright earnest," said Laurentia, sternly. "It is my last word to you—it is war or peace between us—I leave it to your own choice."

"I would not willingly make an enemy of anyone," said van Nerekool, very sadly; "but a clear conscience is to me precious above all things. Farewell, madam."

He covered his face with both his hands, as he hurried from the spot. For awhile he wandered about in the greatest excitement, seeking the loneliest spots in the garden. Presently, however, he somewhat recovered his composure, and, stunned by the blow that had just fallen on him, he made his way back again to the inner gallery. There he found Matilda van Meidema, who called to him, and said: "Mr. van Nerekool, my friend Anna has requested me to give you a message, it is this. Unless some means of rescue be found, Ardjan's case is hopelessly lost. All the witnesses have either been corrupted or put out of the way, so that his condemnation is certain."

"And from whom has Miss Anna got all this information?'

asked van Nerekool with a sad absent smile.

"She had it from me, Mr. van Nerekool," replied the young gir

"And how did you get to know all this, Miss Meidema?" he asked.

"Why, Mr. Judge," said she, "you happen to be in a rather inquisitive mood! I suppose," she continued with a laugh, "your curiosity is professional. The only thing I can tell you is that I have obeyed Anna's orders and delivered my message." Thus saying, with a curtsey she hurried away.

Charles wandered about for a while objectless among the guests. But, after his conversation with Laurentia he could find no rest. He looked round for Anna; but she, as daughter of the house, had, on the occasion of a formal party like the present, many duties to perform. Though the young girl's face showed but little enjoyment of the scene around her, yet it wore its usual pleasant smile. It was, however, a forced smile which, to her lover's eye, signified nothing else than anxiety and restlessness. At that sight all desire to remain left him, especially as he knew that he could not venture to approach her. So he went to look for his hat; and having found it, took leave of the Resident and of his wife, and a few minutes after he was gone.

"Take care! Think it over well," had been Laurentia's last whispered words as he made his parting bow.

CHAPTER XII.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.—MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

IT was getting rather late in the day. The sun had already risen high when Mr. and Mrs. van Gulpendam took their seat at the breakfast-table in the pandoppo. The Resident, according to his invariable custom, had risen early; but the ladies did not quite so soon recover from the fatigues of the last night's ball. When, at length, fair Laurentia appeared in the pandoppo she found her husband sitting in full dress, light-blue coat and silver buttons on which the arms of Holland shone conspicuous; but evidently in very bad temper. He sat impatiently turning about a paper in his hands: "At last!" he cried.

"What do you mean by at last," she rejoined, "I suppose that is to be my good-morning?"

"Very likely," said he gruffly. "Now is this breakfast-time I ask you? You know how very busy I am."

"Then why did you not have your breakfast before?" asked his wife.

"Why? why?" he grumbled, "that is always the way you women put us off! You know I don't like to sit down to meals alone!"

"Then why did you not call Anna? She would have had some news to tell you," replied the wife.

It appears that, after the party, Laurentia had not taken the trouble to enlighten her husband as to what had occurred on the previous evening. She had so much to do as hostess—and then she had not missed a single dance;—the young men of Santjoemeh had been simply charming!

"Anna, Anna," growled van Gulpendam, "why, I have seen nothing of her yet. You women never can have a good stiff run without being knocked up all the next day! But—what is up with Anna? What news may she have to tell me?"

"I will leave that to her—Anna!— call your young lady," said Laurentia turning to Dalima, who just then came into the pandoppo.

"Miss Anna will be here presently," said the baboe.

"But meanwhile," repeated van Gulpendam, "what news has the girl to tell me?"

"Oh," said Laurentia wearily, "I would much rather she should herself tell you. She could much better explain it herself why she allowed van Nerekool to kiss her last night in the garden. But, I should like to know what paper that is there in your hand. You know I don't like to see the rubbish at my table. There is room enough in the office for all that sort of thing; and what's more you have my full leave to keep all those things there!"

Van Gulpendam had taken the rather startling communication of his wife quite coolly; so coolly, indeed, that it exceedingly provoked fair Laurentia. She had, therefore, sought to vent her displeasure upon something, and that something, she had found in the unlucky piece of paper.

"It is a telegram," said van Gulpendam, moodily, "which I have just received, and which has annoyed me not a little."

"A telegram?" she cried.

"Yes, a message from the Hague. Look! yesterday evening at nine o'clock, this thing was sent off, and this morning by daylight, we have it here."

"Well," said Laurentia, in no mood to humour her husband, "do you call that so very quick? Don't you remember Amy's letter, when we had sent her our congratulations on her engagement? Our telegram left the office at Santjoemeh at eleven o'clock, and, she wrote to us, that the very same morning at nine o'clock, it was delivered to her. That's quick if you like—it seems to me, rather more than quick!"

"Why, Laurentia," said her husband, "I have explained it to you. The reason lies in the difference of longitude."

"Yes, yes, I know all about that, the sun turns—no the earth turns. Oh yes, I know all about it. But that does not alter the fact that it was very quick work. Fancy to receive a telegram, actually before it was sent off! But what can there be in that telegram from the Hague, to put you out so?"

"Bah!" said van Gulpendam, "what do you women know about business?"

"Yes, but tell me," she insisted, "from whom is it?"

"It is from my brother Gerard," replied van Gulpendam shortly.

"And what is it about?" asked Laurentia; "now don't keep me waiting, it is not gallant."

At the word gallant, van Gulpendam made a wry face, "Oh," said he, "it is about the matter of the Netherland's Lion. Nothing can come to it—unless—"

"Yes, unless what?" inquired Laurentia.

"Unless the opium monopoly at Santjoemeh, can be made to bring in a great deal more money than it does at present. The estimates of our colonial secretary are not at all approved of, and they reckon upon getting a couple of millions more from that source."

"They, they, who are they?" continued Laurentia.

"Why—Sidin, pull down the blinds!" said the resident prudently. "That sun," continued he, "is so troublesome shining through the venetians. You ask who are they? Why *they* are the government, the ministers, the Lower House in fact."

"Oh," said Laurentia, carelessly, "is that all?"

"Is that all! of course it is," replied her husband grumpily, "quite enough too, you know as well as I do that the farmer pays more than twelve hundred thousand guilders for his privilege."

"Well," said Laurentia, "what of that?—next year he will have to put down fifteen or eighteen hundred—there's the end of it."

"Of course," growled the Resident, "it is easy enough to say there's the end of it."

"When is the contract to be renewed?" asked she.

"This September," was the reply.

"Very good, then you leave it to me."

"Yes, but—" objected van Gulpendam.

"Now, my dear," said she, "pray, let us have no fuss, our dear Javanese friends will have to smoke a little more opium apiece—and—you will wear the bertes knabbeldat—what do you call the thing?"

"*Virtus nobilitat*," said van Gulpendam, with dignity.

"All right! the *Virtus nobilitat*, you will wear it in your button hole, but—it will be my doing."

"How so?" asked the husband, in surprise.

"Now Gulpie, that is my secret. You will see, the opium contract will produce four or six hundred thousand more. Don't therefore let us have any troubling about it before the time. Now let us change the subject. How is it," she continued, "that you took so coolly what I just now told you about Anna? about Anna, you know, and van Nerekool?"

"Come," said the Resident, "let us have our breakfast, Anna is not coming down it seems, and I have no time to spare."

"All right," said his wife, "let us have breakfast, but that will not, I hope, prevent you from answering my question?"

Van Gulpendam shook his head.

"Pass the coffee, nènèh," said Laurentia to her maid Wong Toewâ.

When the two cups of fragrant coffee stood before the pair, and each had cut a piece of bread, had buttered it, and spread upon it a thin slice of smoked venison, the lady, still anxious to have her answer, asked:

"Well now, Gulpie dear?"

"If I am ever to succeed in getting more out of the opium contract," said he musingly, "I shall probably want van Nerekool's help."

"His help? What? for the opium contract?" said Laurentia, with an innocent smile, as if she understood nothing at all about the matter.

"Just listen to me," replied her husband. "If Lim Ho, in that matter, you know, of Ardjan, should be found guilty and condemned—why, then, his father Lim Yang Bing must, of course, be excluded from the competition altogether."

"Why so?" asked Laurentia.

"Don't you see why?" retorted van Gulpendam—"If for no other reason; then simply to shut the mouth of the papers. What a row they would make if the father of a man found guilty of opium-smuggling and of a barbarous outrage moreover, should have the monopoly granted him. Why it would be worse than the noise about the capstan when they are heaving the anchor!"

"But, my dear," objected Laurentia, "do you think that at Batavia they will trouble themselves about the barking of the local papers?"

"Yes and no," replied the Resident. "The curs themselves will be despised no doubt; but still, in self-defence, they will have to order an inquiry."

"And you will be the man to hold it, won't you?" said Laurentia, with a meaning smile.

"Possibly I might be, but what if the Dutch papers were to take up the cry?"

"Oh, the Dutch press!" said Laurentia, disdainfully. "It is pretty tame on the subject of opium. It will never join in a cry against it unless it be actually compelled."

"Yes," said the Resident, "that's all very fine, but one never can tell how the cat may jump, or what secret influence may be at work. If Lim Ho is found guilty, it would most certainly be advisable that his father should not bid at all for the monopoly."

"But," said Laurentia, "he is the wealthiest of the Chinese Company."

"I know that as well as you do," grumbled her husband.

"Put him aside, and your bids will fall instead of rising," insisted his wife.

"No doubt they will—"

"And then, my dear Gulpie," said Laurentia, with a laugh, "you may whistle for your bertes knabbeldat."

"Just so," said he, moodily.

"But, if that be so," persisted Laurentia, "it seems to me that Lim Ho must not be found guilty. He must be got off at any price, that's my way of looking at it."

"You are perfectly right, my dear," replied the Resident, "and it is precisely for the purpose of getting him off, that I shall want van Nerekool's help. If he should become our son-in-law—or if the mere prospect of such a thing were to be held up to him—then—I have already told you, that I intend—as soon as Zuidhoorn is out of the way, to appoint him president of the court *pro tem.*"

"Yes," broke in Laurentia, hastily, "but he won't hear of it."

"Won't hear of it?" said her husband, slowly, and in surprise.

"No, he won't hear of it."

"How do you know that?"

"Well," said Laurentia, "I will tell you. When last night I found these two young people hugging and kissing in the garden, I sent Anna about her business."

"Yes," said the Resident, very anxiously, "and then—"

"Then I just took the opportunity of sounding the young gentleman."

"Of sounding him?" cried van Gulpendam in dismay.

"Aye, my word was 'sounding,'" replied Laurentia, very quietly, "but I tell you there is no dealing with that fellow."

Thereupon Laurentia told her husband pretty accurately what had taken place the night before in the Pandan grove and under the Tjemara trees, and reported to him the conversation she had there held with Charles van Nerekool. She omitted to tell him—very prudently too—that if she, by chance, had had to deal with a man of laxer morals and principles, she would have run great risk of becoming her daughter's rival. When her story was ended, her husband heaved a deep sigh and throwing himself back in his chair he said:

"Oh those women, those women! You have gone to work much too rashly," continued he. "You ought to have tacked about instead of running. No doubt you had a fair chance before you—a very nice south easterly trade—but you have thrown it away. You have gone full tilt at your object, and so have overshot your anchorage!"

"Oh, bother your tacks and runnings and trades and anchorages," cried fair Laurentia, out of patience, and vexed beyond measure to find that all her fine management was so lightly spoken of. "You just let me alone, that's the best thing you can do."

"But," said the Resident, "you have spoilt the whole job!"

"There was not much to spoil in the job, I can tell you, there was no doing anything with that booby."

Very bitterly indeed did the fair woman speak these words.

If but her Gulpie had been able to seize the meaning of her smile. But after all the French realistic school may be right when it says that there is no blinder thing in the world than a husband. At all events, poor van Gulpendam did not see, or he did not understand that peculiar smile.

"No doing anything with him, you say? Ah, well, who knows. Just listen to me, Laurie. It is just possible, nay it is probable that, after such a conversation, van Nerekool will shortly—to-day perhaps or to-morrow—come and ask me for our Anna's hand."

"Well," said Laurentia, "what then?"

"Then I shall see," replied her husband with a self-satisfied smile, "then I shall see what port I must steer for. I may, perhaps, know how to bring him to his bearings. I may be clever enough to drive him into some harbour of refuge."

"I hope you may," said Laurentia, increduously, "but I very much doubt your success."

"Meanwhile," resumed van Gulpendam, "you must use all your influence with Anna. It is very likely that van Nerekool will give her a hail before he makes up his mind to board me Now, should that happen—why then all may be well—You understand me, Laurie, don't you? Anna must be our strongest ally."

"But," cried Laurentia, "would you really give our dear, beautiful child to that sanctimonious young prig?"

"I must, if I can't manage it otherwise; but, you see we are not on that tack just yet. If once we get into a good steady trade, and we have got what we want—why then, we shall no doubt find some means to get Anna to go about."

Laurentia nodded. How little did these two parents know their own child!

"And," continued the Resident, cynically, "to heave the love-stricken simpleton overboard as so much useless ballast."

"Hush," said he, "here she comes!"

"Good morning, Anna, my darling. You have slept soundly, I daresay, after your night's dissipation. How she did enjoy herself! How the little corvette ran from the slips! Why! you did not miss a single dance!"

Anna, to use her father's favourite phraseology, was thoroughly taken aback. Her father then, had heard nothing at all about it—absolutely nothing! After her adventure in the garden, she quite anticipated stern faces in the morning, and was prepared for a good scolding. That, indeed, was partly the

reason why she had lingered so much longer than usual in her room. And now, lo and behold! her father greeted her more kindly and more cheerfully than ever before. Perhaps mamma had had no time to make the serious communication. No, that was hardly possible, her parents had been for a considerable time together in the pandoppo, she knew that from Dalima. And yet—well—she replied to her father's hearty greeting with an equally hearty kiss, and was just turning to her mother when van Gulpendam said:

"That's right—now I have had my breakfast, I have had my morning kiss—now I must be off to work, there is plenty of it waiting for me. I must leave you ladies alone."

"Anna," continued he, more seriously, "listen attentively to what your mother will have to say to you. Remember you must take all that she will tell you as if it came from me. Good-bye, Anna, good-bye, Laurentia."

And off he was, through the inner, into the front gallery, where he met his private secretary who had been, for some time, waiting for him. He shook hands, offered him a cigar, took one himself, and proceeded with great care to light it at the match which his oppasser respectfully offered him. When it was well lighted, he handed the taper to his subordinate, who addressed himself as carefully and as systematically as his chief to the important function of lighting his cigar.

This done, the two officials walked for awhile up and down the roomy gallery, discussing the morning's news, and making arrangements for the day's work which lay before them.

Meanwhile, nonna Anna had exchanged her customary morning greeting with her mother, and had sat down by her side at the breakfast table, while baboe Dalima offered her the cup of coffee which she had poured out at the little side table.

"It is nice, miss Anna," said she, with a pleasant smile to her youthful mistress.

Anna gave her a friendly little nod, took up the cup, and slowly sipped the fragrant decoction, now and then passing the tip of her tongue over her rosy lips as if unwilling to lose the least drop. When the little cup was empty, she handed it back to the baboe, with the words:

"Another cup."

"Engèh, Nana," answered Dalima, as she took the cup and hastened to the side-table.

Then Anna buttered a slice of bread; but she did this so slowly and deliberately, with such an amount of concentrated attention indeed, that it was clear her mind was not upon what she was doing. In fact, she dreaded the opening of the impending conversation. Laurentia sat next to her daughter not speaking a single word; but keeping her eye constantly upon the girl. Very steadily she looked at her, and very kindly too. She sat admiring the pure, fresh complexion of the young girl, who, although she had passed a great part of the night in dancing, and had probably slept but very little during the remaining portion, was still as clear and bright as ever. She admired also her slim yet well rounded form, admirably set off by the pretty kabaja, and she sat calculating to what extent those charms might have captivated that cold and pensive van Nerekool, to what extent they might force him to bow his neck under the yoke which was being prepared for him. But, if the mother's eye brightened as she looked upon her daughter's beauty, yet, amidst all this admiration, one sad thought would come up to her mind. More than a quarter of a century ago, van Hoop gave that thought utterance when he said:

"Daughter a-courting—mother grows old." And then there came over her a feeling of jealousy, as she thought of the manly beauty of Charles van Nerekool, who had treated her with such strange indifference. Would she have to give up all hope of entangling that young man if he could be made to despair of ever obtaining Anna's hand?

But—away with all such idle thoughts and fancies. The words of her husband were still ringing in her ears. Her business was to save the son of the opium-farmer, if she wished to see her dear Gulpie's breast adorned with the bertes knabbeldat.

Thus, in silence, the daughter and the mother sat side by side. The former could not trust herself to speak, and tried to hide her confusion by affecting to be wholly engrossed in her breakfast, for which, if the truth were told, she felt but very little appetite. The latter sat collecting her thoughts, and making up her mind how best to make the attack.

At length, Laurentia began in the most affectionate manner.

"Anna, my dear child, now just tell me what could have induced you to walk about in the garden alone with Mr. van Nerekool last night?"

"Mother," stammered the girl, in dire confusion.

"You need not blush so, my dear child," continued her mother; "I saw quite enough yesterday to tell me all that is going on. But that does not make it clear to me how you formed that attachment. I fancy, Anna," she continued, "I fancy I have some right to your confidence, have I not?"

"O mother!" cried the poor girl, "I cannot myself explain to you how it all happened."

"But, Anna!"

"I love Charles," cried Anna, wildly; "I love him, that is all I know about it!"

"But tell me, Anna, have you ever seriously asked yourself whether you feel for him that deep and lasting affection without which no woman ought to permit the addresses of any man?"

"Yes, mother."

"Have you asked yourself whether this man, who has for the moment gained your affections, is the one to whom you are prepared to devote your whole life?"

"Yes, mother," replied Anna, bravely, "yes, mother, for my love for him rests entirely on the noble qualities which distinguish him from all others. It is his honest heart especially which has won my love."

"Now all this, Anna," resumed Mrs. van Gulpendam, "is somewhat frivolous."

"Frivolous, mother!" cried the young girl; "do you call it frivolous that my eye has been open not to mere outward show, not to the mere superficial varnish and polish of society; but to genuine and substantial qualities, to sterling firmness of character and to honesty of principle?"

"Tut, tut, tut!" exclaimed Laurentia, "these are mighty fine words indeed."

"Do you disapprove of my choice, mother dear?" asked Anna.

"Disapprove," said Laurentia, gravely, "no, my child, it is not I who disapprove."

"Oh! yes; I know that papa is not at all fond of Mr. van Nerekool!"

Mrs. van Gulpendam made no reply to this exclamation.

"Have you loved him long?" asked she at length.

"Yes, mamma; my love for him has grown without my knowing it."

"Come now, Anna," said Laurentia, with a sad incredulous smile, "come now."

"I do assure you," pleaded the girl, "it was altogether without my knowledge."

"How then, and when did you discover that you were in love with him?" persisted her mother.

"You know, mamma, do you not? that he used to visit here frequently—very frequently."

"Well, yes," said Laurentia, "I know that; but that is no answer to my question."

"During his visits here," continued the young girl, "I was generally alone in his company. At one time you would be engaged at cards; at another you were surrounded by your friends and taken up in discussing some article of toilette or deep in the secrets of a plum-pudding. At another time again, you, as hostess and wife of the chief man in the district, had to do the honours of the house and had to occupy yourself with generals, colonels, presidents and such like; and amidst all this business you had no time to devote to your daughter—"

"But," cried Laurentia, interrupting her daughter's words; "that sounds very much like a reproach."

"Do let me get on, mother dear," implored Anna; "do let me get on. You have asked me how that affection arose in my heart—I would now lay open my heart to you; you have a right to it; you are my mother."

"Then," she resumed, "I felt myself so utterly lonely in those gay circles in which commonplace, self-sufficiency, mediocrity, and frivolity reigned supreme. I felt myself so lonely in the midst of that buzz of conversation which, to me, had no attraction—in the midst of all those people for whom I had the greatest aversion—"

"Anna, Anna!" cried her mother, "take care of what you are saying. Remember it is your parents' friends and your parents' company that you are thus censuring."

"Is it my fault, dearest mother," continued Anna, "that I feel a distaste for all such society? Have you not often felt the same aversion—tell me, mother dear?"

Laurentia gave no reply; she seemed to devour her daughter's words.

"Go on," said she, somewhat sternly.

"Then," resumed Anna, "I used to slip away quietly to my piano; there I found one never-failing means of getting rid of the company I disliked—then—"

"Oh! yes," said Laurentia, sarcastically, "then my daughter used to plunge into Beethoven, Mendelsohn, Mozart, Chopin and all the rest of them, and neglect the world—"

"No, mother," hastily broke in Anna, "not neglect—but tried for a while to forget the world which for me, as I have said, has no attractions—in the glorious realm of music, which, as a paradise, lay open before me."

"That is a mighty fine speech," said Laurentia, with mocking lip but with moistened eye; for the emotional woman could not, with all her cynicism, remain unmoved at her daughter's enthusiasm. "Very fine, indeed; but, all this, remember, does not explain to me how you first came to discover that you were in love with van Nerekool."

"Among all the company which surrounded you," continued Anna, "there were but very few indeed who could resist the temptation of a quadrille-party, of some political dispute or of a description of a white damask burnouse to—"

"To group themselves around the priestess of Harmony," said Mrs. van Gulpendam, with a good-natured smile.

"To enjoy some better and higher pleasure than the trivial conversation of the so-called *beau monde*," continued Anna. "Among those few was Mr. van Nerekool, or rather I should say he was the only one; for even if now and then some young man would come and stand at my piano for a moment or two, —he did so—not for the sake of the music, still less for the sake of her who played it—"

"Now, Anna dear!" broke in Mrs. van Gulpendam, "we are getting a little too modest I think!"

"Still less I said," continued the young girl, not noticing the interruption, "for the sake of her who played it; but merely because I happened to be the daughter of the Resident to which some little compliment ought now and then to be paid, and some little politeness was due. All these would run away quickly enough the moment the cards were brought in or the moment they heard some quotation from the colonial news in the Java papers. Then it was that I was left alone with Charles. I found in him a true lover of music, and one who can feel what music means! Thus we were generally isolated in the midst of a crowd, and thus used we to express our feelings in the delicious melody which our fingers could produce— No, no, dear mother," she continued, most seriously, "pray do not smile. On such occasions never one word escaped from the lips of either of us which could convey the slightest hint of what was passing in our hearts. That word might perhaps have remained unspoken; for I am convinced that van Nerekool was thinking as little about love as I was, and that we both felt nothing more than a mutual attraction to one another. But last night—during the *Invitation à la valse*, our secret slipped out—and oh, dearest mother, you yourself witnessed our first kiss ! "

As she spoke these words the young girl gently laid her head upon her mother's breast, who flung her arm around her as she looked into her daughter's appealing eyes.

" And now, mother," continued Anna, softly, " can you forgive your child for having obeyed the voice of her heart ? "

" My darling girl," said Laurentia, " not only do I forgive you for what was no more than natural ; but what is more, I can tell you that circumstances might arise which would make me fully approve of your choice."

" Approve of my choice, mother ! " exclaimed the girl. " Oh, you make me happy indeed ! " And kneeling down, she hid her face in her mother's lap and broke out into convulsive sobs which shook her entire frame.

Laurentia, wholly unprepared for this storm of passion, lifted her up and tried to soothe her.

" Come, now, Anna," said she, " try and be calm ; try and compose yourself ! How can my simple words have moved you so ? Could you possibly suspect me of not doing my utmost to secure your happiness ? "

" My happiness ! " cried the young girl. " Yes, my happiness —yes, dearest mother, that is the right word—it is indeed my happiness," continued she, as she covered her mother's face with kisses.

" Now, Anna," at length said Laurentia, anxious to put an end to this tender effusion, " do sit down quietly by my side, as you were sitting just now, and then with your hand in mine and your eye fixed on mine, we can talk over this delicate matter quietly. Come and sit down here close to my heart."

She pressed her child's head to her bosom. It was a pretty picture, but it conveyed, alas ! the exact contrary of the story of the serpent and the husbandman.

" But," asked Anna, anxiously, and folding her hands as if in prayer, " do you think papa will ever give his consent ? "

" I think he may," replied Laurentia.

'Oh, that would be a blessing ! " cried Anna. " Don't you think, mammy dear, that would be too great a blessing ? "

" No, Anna, not at all, now listen to me. Your father will not be very easily won, in fact we shall have to take him by storm."

" Dear mother," cried Anna, " have you not spoken to papa about it yet ? "

" Not only will it be hard to gain him," continued Laurentia, coldly, without noticing her daughter's interruption, " but something would have to happen by which van Nerekool might conciliate him."

" I feel certain, dearest mother," cried Anna, " that Charles will do anything to obtain my hand ! "

" Do you ? " asked Laurentia. " He would do anything you say. Are you quite sure that you are not just a little too sanguine ? "

" Oh, mother dear ! " cried the girl in a deprecating tone.

" Yes, I said too sanguine ; for I have some reason to fear that Charles is not quite so deeply in love as he would wish you to suppose."

" Mother ! " cried Anna, looking up at her reproachfully.

" Don't interrupt me, Anna. Last night, as you know, I remained for some time in the garden with Mr. van Nerekool after I had, from his own lips, heard the confession of his love."

" Mamma dear ! " cried the young girl, breathlessly, " his confession did you say ! "

" Now pray don't excite yourself," said Laurentia with an icy smile. " After he had confessed his attachment to you—I opened to him the prospect, not only of obtaining your father's consent—"

" Oh, mother, dear, how kind of you," now sighed the young girl as she covered Laurentia's face with kisses.

Laurentia gently put her aside and resumed : " I opened to him not only the prospect of gaining your father's consent; but I further proposed to him a means of greatly improving his own position, and of thus making his marriage with a girl like you, more possible."

" A girl like me ? " asked Anna in surprise. " Am I then unlike all other girls that a marriage with me would be less possible ? "

" My dear child," said Laurentia, " listen to reason. You know that from your childhood you have been brought up in the midst of a certain degree of luxury,—now surely you would not like to renounce all these comforts, to which you have been born and bred and—"

" For the man I love I would sacrifice anything ! " eagerly cried the girl.

" Yes, I know," replied Laurentia coldly, " all that reads very well in a novel; but you will not find that it will stand the test of experience. In practical everyday life the saying is but too true: 'When poverty enters at the door, love flies out at the window.'"

"Oh!" cried Anna, "there is no fear of that with me and Charles."

"That is all very fine," continued Laurentia, "but we, your parents, we who have to entrust your future happiness to a husband, we must take care that that husband can offer you a home free from the anxieties of poverty. Now we were in hopes that we might have met Mr. van Nerekool half way in this matter— But—"

"But—what mamma? oh, tell me what he said."

"Why, he had only one word to say—and that word was 'never.'"

"Never," cried Anna, "I do not quite understand you, mother. You told me that he confessed to you that he loves me—you showed him some prospect of winning my hand and he replies 'never!' How can that possibly be?"

"I placed a condition before him," said Laurentia somewhat nervously.

"A condition!" cried Anna, "what might that be?"

"Well—it was a condition of marriage—if you will have it plainly."

"And—" cried Anna, "to that condition of marriage he replied 'never?' I am more puzzled than ever."

"It was after all but a very trifling matter," said Laurentia, "it was merely just a little thing to please your father and, by complying with it, Mr. van Nerekool might have helped your father to win honour and glory—and, moreover, he might have considerably improved his own position."

"Oh, dearest mother," said Anna, "there must be some misunderstanding, Charles is a noble fellow—it is the true nobility of his soul which mainly attracted me to him— Why! not many weeks ago he promised to help me in saving the lover of my baboe and would he now—?"

"What?" exclaimed Laurentia, "the lover of your baboe?"

"Yes," replied Anna, "of baboe Dalima. But what has that to do with it?"

"That is the very case!" cried Mrs. van Gulpendam, "I was recommending him to—"

"Well, then you see," said Anna, quietly, as she interrupted her mother, "you see clearly there must be some misunderstanding—all that will very easily be explained. Tell me, pray, what condition did you propose to van Nerekool?"

"Yes," said Laurentia slowly after a moment's pause, "you are the only one who can arrange this matter. And, pray remember, that this is a question upon which depends van Nerekool's future career—and your own marriage."

And then, the proud ambitious woman told her daughter that she was bent upon obtaining for her husband the order of the Netherland's Lion; that this distinction, however, would not be got unless the returns of the opium trade at Santjoemeh improved considerably—that in fact the *Virtus nobilitat* was to be the price for the increase in the revenue of Holland.

"But," continued Laurentia, "in order to make that increase possible, Lim Yang Bing must continue to hold the opium monopoly—and that he must cease to do if his son Lim Ho be found guilty of smuggling and of outrage upon the natives. Therefore we are under the cruel necessity—!"

As her mother began to speak Anna listened attentively; as she continued, the girl sat with her eyes fixed on her mother's lips as though she would read the words before she uttered them; at these last words, she flew up wild and furious and passionately broke in upon Laurentia's speech: "Ardjan is to be sacrificed, that my father may get the Netherland's Lion—that never—no, mother, do you hear me, that cannot—that shall not be!"

"But, Anna!" exclaimed Laurentia much alarmed at her daughter's violence, "pray do not excite yourself so!"

"And did you make that proposal to Charles?— Yes? Oh, then I am wretched indeed!"

"But, Anna—" Laurentia began to say.

"Now I understand his 'never,'" said the girl bitterly. "No, he is right, never, never shall he marry the daughter of such parents as mine!"

At these words she dashed out of the pandoppo and locked herself in her own room.

CHAPTER XIII.

A RIDE TO BANJOE PAHIT. AMOKH!

"NOW are you ready to start?"

With this question, Edward van Rheijn came rushing into van Nerekool's room on Saturday afternoon.

"Yes, I am quite ready," answered his friend; "but how about horses?"

"Oh! Verstork has taken good care of that," was van Rheijn's reply, "if you will let me send out your servant for a few moments you will have them prancing at the door in less than ten minutes."

The young men had not long to wait, for they had scarcely time to drink a glass of beer and light a cigar, before two excellent saddle horses made their appearance. They were well-bred Makassars, not so perfect in shape, and handsome to look at as Kadoeërs or Battakers; but good serviceable animals with broad, well made chests, indicating both strength and endurance, and provided with good sinewy legs which, if not particularly symmetrical, were strong and fit for hard work.

In a twinkling, the young men were in the saddle.

"And now, your rifle?" said Edward.

"Sidin, give me the gun," said van Nerekool to his servant.

The man handed to his master the splendid rifle which, at his request, the regent of Santjoemeh had lent to the judicial functionary.

Charles slung the weapon by the strap over his shoulder, put a couple of revolvers into his holsters; so that, as far as arms went, he was almost as well off as his friend van Rheijn. A few moments later, the pair had left Santjoemeh, and at a brisk trot were riding eastward in the direction of Banjoe Pahit, which was their destination.

They did not talk much by the way, in fact only a word now and then passed between them. There was indeed no very great inducement to conversation; for, though the road they were following was fairly well shaded by Tamarind and Kanan trees, yet the tropical heat was most oppressive, and would not much decrease until the sun was nearing the horizon. But it was only three in the afternoon, so that the orb of day was still far from the end of his journey.

The horses, however, were high-mettled and indefatigable and kept up a good pace, at a trot where the road was level, and breaking into a gallop, when it ran up hill. The noble animals very seldom required to be pulled up to a walk, and could not long be kept to that pace to which they were but little accustomed. Moreover, the scenery through which the two friends were passing might well, in every sense of the word, be called enchanting. First their road lay through pleasant looking dessas, whose dark roofs of atap-leaves and golden yellow fences, formed a most agreeable prospect in the midst of the dark foliage of the fruit trees which completely overshadowed them. Next came plantations of cocoa-nut trees where the slender palms planted in regular rows, lifted up high in the air their waving plume-like tops, and cast curious ever-changing shadows on the turf which covered the ground. Further on still, as squares on a vast chess-board, were seen the extensive rice-fields, the dikes or mounds which bounded them richly overgrown with grass or shaded by toeri or klampies bushes showing quite distinctly, while the rice-fields themselves lay, at this time of the year, glittering in the sunlight, like so many huge water-tanks; for after harvest they are flooded, and then present an aspect of molten silver enclosed in frames of bright green. Then behind the rice-fields arose the stately mountains which densely covered with virgin forest, formed a deep band of dark-green around the glittering squares. Further on again, in the far distance, all became indistinct, and assumed a uniform deep purple hue which contrasted sharply and most beautifully with the light azure of the sky above. Now and then, after the horses had had a long stiff gallop up a more than usually steep slope, they would require a few minutes' rest; then the riders upon looking back, caught glimpses of the Java sea which lay on the horizon, shining under the sun's beams like a boundless mirror on which the white sails of the ships appeared as hovering sea-gulls, or the thick smoke from some steamer's funnel curled darkly over the watery expanse.

Thus, our young friends had but little time to notice the intensity of the heat. Their's was still that happy time of life in which man is most capable of enjoying all that is grand and beautiful. Both of them also were of a somewhat poetical nature, and the ever-varying scenery which to the right and to the left lay stretched out before them, could not fail to captivate and charm them by its sublimity and its beauty. Time had indeed flown with them, when, in the neighbourhood of a small dessa called Kalimatti, they caught sight, in the distance, of four gentlemen, followed by a numerous escort all mounted and spurring on to meet them.

"Hurrah!" cried van Rheijn, "there is William Verstork. Look, Charles, that man yonder on the fine iron-grey riding at the head of the party!"

"Who are those with him?" asked van Nerekool—"Why if my eyes don't deceive me—they are August van Beneden, Leendert Grashuis, Theodoor Grenits and—by Heaven—yes, Fritz Mokesuep also!"

"You are right!" shouted his companion, "and escorted by the wedono, the djoeroetoelies, the loerah, the kebajan, the kamitoewag, the tjank (native chiefs) good Heavens!—by all the district and dessa-grandees of Banjoe Pahit and their whole suite! And," he continued, as he drew nearer, "upon my word all in full dress on their little horses, with tiger-skin saddle-cloths and richly embroidered red velvet or cloth saddles. Hurrah, capital fun!" cried Edward van Rheijn, greatly excited as he waved his pith helmet to the advancing troop.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" shouted the others gleefully, and soon the group of horsemen had joined the two friends and greetings and welcomes were warmly exchanged.

"You seem to be out of spirits, Charles," said Verstork to van Nerekool as he shook his hand; "what is the matter with you, old fellow—I hope you are not ill?"

"No, thank you," replied the other, "I am perfectly well. I will tell you by-and-by what ails me."

"Mr. van Nerekool is suffering perhaps from the effects of a refusal," remarked one of the young fellows who had accompanied Verstork.

The controller cast a look at his friend and noticed at once that the random and heedless shaft had struck home. He therefore at once changed the conversation and said, "If you are not unwell then let us forward to Banjoe Pahit."

"Gentlemen," he cried, "by threes trot!" and a moment after he gave the word "Gallop!" just like some old cavalry officer.

There was no need of the spur,—the fiery horses at once dashed forward, and away went the little band of friends galloping down the avenue which lay stretched out before them, and which, with its soft carpet of turf, hardly gave out a sound under the horses' hoofs.

"Capital road this," cried one of the company. "It speaks highly for the care the controller takes of his district!"

William Verstork gave him an approving nod, he was evidently by no means insensible to the compliment.

"Good means of communication, my friend, are the highways to prosperity," replied he sententiously.

"No doubt," observed another with a scornful smile, "if the population is allowed to make use of them!"

Behind the party of European horsemen, at the distance prescribed by etiquette, followed the native chiefs with their retinue. They were all mounted on spirited little horses of pure native breed, which were quite able to keep up with the pace of the others, and might perhaps, in a long journey, have outstayed them.

Now, while this cavalcade is rapidly moving on to Banjoe Pahit, we will seize the opportunity of making a slight acquaintance with the companions Verstork had brought with him. We will do this in as few words as possible, as some of them, at least, are only casually connected with this narrative.

Augustus van Beneden was a native of Gelderland, a fine healthy looking fellow of about twenty, whose yellow curly hair and firm, yet open countenance were characteristic of the inhabitants of the Betuwe. He was a barrister by profession, and had lately settled down in Santjoemeh where he was beginning to get a fairly good practice.

Leendert Grashuis, a South-Hollander, held the position of deputy surveyor at the land registry office of Santjoemeh. He was an excellent mathematician, and had greatly distinguished himself in the geodetic and geomorphic sciences. As surveying engineer, his services were invaluable in all questions which had to do with the fixing of the boundaries of property in the residence. When he entered upon his duties, he found the whole matter of boundaries in the most utter confusion—a confusion, which became only worse confounded, when, in settling disputes about real property, the official maps had to be produced and appealed to. When called upon to give his decision, Leendert Grashuis always was on the side of right and equity, and offered the most determined opposition to all manner of rapacity or exaction, even should it happen to be the Government itself which made the encroachment. He was about seven and twenty years of age, and upon his agreeable exterior, good-nature and perfect sincerity were so plainly stamped, that he was a universal favourite with all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Theodoor Grenits also, was a man of a similar nature. He was a native of Limburg, and, in his intercourse with his neighbours the Belgians, had acquired a good deal of the free and easy manner of that nation. He, therefore, was more especially in request in company where youth and pleasure presided. He had received his early education at the Athenæum at Maastricht, and had then gone to Leyden to complete his legal studies. But in these studies, he had most signally failed. Now he was employed in a merchant's office, and was striving, by strict attention to his work and by diligence, to make up, in a mercantile career, for the time he had wasted at the University. But, though no great student, he also was a right noble and honest young fellow, and in thorough sympathy with the company in which we just now have met him.

Fritz Mokesuep, however, was a man of totally different stamp, and was in every way the very opposite of the others. He was about thirty years old and was a clerk in the revenue office at Santjoemeh. Education he had none; for at a very early age his father had placed him in the office of a tax-collector in a small provincial town in Holland. This want of education necessarily closed to him the prospect of rising in the social scale, which, however, he was very ambitious of doing. An opportunity had offered, which he thought would enable him to attain his object. The Colonial Secretary, having need of the services of men acquainted with certain special branches in the collection of the revenue which were at that time badly managed in Dutch India, offered to send out thither a certain number of men thus specially qualified, without demanding any further examination whatever. Of this offer Mokesuep had taken advantage, in the hope that adroitness and suppleness of spirit might, in those far-away possessions, supply for him the place of more solid attainments. In this hope, however, he was doomed to be disappointed, for, having on his arrival in Batavia, been placed as third clerk in the department of finance, he had very soon given abundant evidence of the exceeding narrowness of his views and abilities; and thus he was packed off to Santjoemeh in the capacity which he was now still occupying there, and which bid fair to be his "bâton de maréchal." He was literally a "tax-collector" in the least favourable sense of the word; and, upon his naturally depraved character, the very nature of his office had had a still more depraving effect. He was artful, cunning, hypocritical, and thoroughly false by nature. His only pleasure in the world was to scrape and to hoard, and he scrupled not to employ any means, even lying and cheating, to gratify his passion. This grasping instinct of his came out, of course, most strongly in his mode of collecting the taxes; and the narrowness of his mind showed itself in the petty annoyances with which he was perpetually plaguing all those with whom he came into official contact. His greatest enjoyment was in extorting the last half-cent though he would never protect anyone against demands however excessive. On the contrary, the Indian Government might safely reckon upon his co-operation, whenever money had to be squeezed out, even though it might be by means the most arbitrary and the most unjust. His outward appearance, was entirely in harmony with his character. His head was small, gradually growing narrower towards the top, and was sparsely covered with chestnut hair, which he wore plastered against the temples, in two elegant curls by means of bandoline, gum, starch, fishlime, or some such abomination. His face was long and angular, and wore that faded yellow look which sometimes, a towel will assume when allowed to lie for a long time unused, in a drawer or cupboard. His nose was well-formed and sharp; but with the projecting lips of his small mouth, it formed a profile something between that of a baboon and a ferret—at all events, it plainly enough indicated that he belonged to the family of the rodentia. That was the reason, perhaps, why he was familiarly called Muizenkop (mouse-head). Not a vestige of hair or down appeared on his chin or lip—in fact a Jesuit father might have envied him his sallow faded complexion. How could a man like William Verstork have ever admitted such a fellow into his company? The reason was obvious. Mokesuep was the strict letter of fiscal regulations incarnate, and as the controller wanted to have as little as possible to do with the narrow minded quibblings of the financial department, he had attached this man to his staff, who, if he did not always give him the best advice with regard to excise questions, at all events protected him against unpleasant remarks.

While the reader has been occupying himself with these very slight personal sketches, the cavalcade had traversed the distance which lay between the dessas Kalimatti and Banjoe Pahit, and now was just entering the latter place.

Banjoe Pahit, a large dessa, pleasantly situated in a mountainous part of the island had, on that afternoon, in honour of its expected guests, donned its festive attire. On all sides the inhabitants appeared out of doors, even the women and children all in their very best apparel which they generally wore only on Fridays. At the flag-staff, which stood in the grounds of the Controller's quarters, a brand-new Dutch flag was flying. The Wedono, the Loerah, and other principal men of the dessa—aye, even the public vaccinator and the Mohammedan priest had followed that example, and expressed their zeal on this occasion, and their goodwill, by hoisting the tricolor by the side of their houses on the bamboo pole from which usually a dovecote used to dangle. The cymbals also were sounding merrily, and imparted to the demonstrations of the inhabitants, who all had turned out to welcome the strange gentlemen, a very characteristic and local stamp.

"Upon my word," cried Edward van Rheijn, once again, "capital fun—our Controller is giving us a grand reception—that is a good beginning."

"I have no hand, whatever, in that fun," replied Verstork. "The people are rejoicing because you have come to rid them of the swarms of tjellings, which ravage their fields to a frightful extent. You will see how enthusiastically they will turn out to-morrow to help us in beating up the game."

The cavalcade had now entered the grounds, in which stood the Controller's house, and the riders were dismounting.

"Gentlemen," said Verstork addressing van Nerekool and van Rheijn, "I bid you welcome to my poor dwelling." And then more generally to the company, he said: "We shall take a few minutes to make ourselves comfortable after our hot ride, and have a bath, and then it will be time to sit down to dinner."

"So early as this?" asked one of the guests.

"To be sure," replied Verstork, "for after we have had something to eat—which meal you must take as a hunter's dinner, substantial but short—we shall have to get into the saddle again, to make a reconnaissance at the Djoerang Pringapoes, for we must settle before sunset where our battue will have to start from, and where we shall have to post ourselves and lie in wait for the animals."

"But we shall have the moon to-night, shall we not?" enquired van Rheijn. "I even fancy that it is full moon."

"You are quite right," said Verstork, "and we shall need it, too, on our ride home. Believe me, our arrangements will take up some considerable time; and then we shall all have to turn in early, because to-morrow by daybreak we must be at our posts in the Djoerang, and begin work."

Then turning to two of the Javanese chiefs, who had followed the party into the grounds, he continued: "Wedono and you Loerah, you will both, I hope, presently, ride with us to the Djoerah?"

"Yes, kandjeng toean," was their reply.

"Thanks; you will stay to dinner?"

But, in the most courteous manner possible, both the Javanese begged to be excused;—they had some business to transact at home—at the time appointed, however, they would be quite ready to start.

They did not say—which was indeed the reason of their refusal—that they feared that among the viands pork might be included, or that some of the dishes might be prepared with lard or some other ingredient derived from the accursed and unclean beast.

The sun had just set, when the sportsmen had finished their survey of the principal approaches to the Djoerang Pringapoes, and had made all the necessary arrangements with the two Loerahs of Banjoe Pahit and of Kaligaweh, for placing the marksmen, and other matters pertaining to the morrow's sport.

They happened to be just then in the lower part of the Djoerang, where a small stream, which runs right through the ravine, flows down over its rocky bed, forming a series of small cataracts and eddies which contribute to make the landscape, already a beautiful one, the most picturesque spot in the whole Residence of Santjoemeh.

A few hundred yards off, in the rice-plain, lay the dessa Kaligaweh, bathed in all the wondrous tints with which the setting sun coloured the evening sky, and cast its reflection in the waters of the rice-fields which, here, were flooded as elsewhere. With its trees, its palms, its bamboos, its orchards, which almost entirely embosomed the little yellow-fenced huts, that little dessa casting its image upon the watery mirror, formed a scene of such magic beauty that the Europeans could not tear themselves from so lovely a view. Nor until the glorious tints began slowly to fade away before the rising moon, could they make up their minds to turn homeward.

They were just saying good-bye to the Loerah of Kaligaweh, and were impressing upon him the necessity of bringing up his people early next morning, and were turning their horses' heads and preparing for a sharp gallop back to Banjoe Pahit when—

suddenly in the direction of the last named dessa, there was heard a frightful tumult. All started and stood still, and listened in the utmost astonishment. The yelling and screaming continued, and then amidst the confused noise made by the shrieks of women and children, the dreadful word, "Amokh, Amokh!" (murder) was distinctly heard.

"What on earth can all this mean, Loerah?" cried Verstork to the chief of the dessa who was still by his side.

"I don't know, kandjeng toean," replied he; "but I will ride off at once and find out."

"Wait a bit," cried another, "here comes a policeman running like mad."

So it was; panting and almost completely out of breath one of those canaries (so called from their yellow braided uniforms) came running up along a pathway which led across the sawah-fields to the Djoerang Pringapoes. As soon as he got up to the group of horsemen he squatted down by the Controller's horse and made the sembah.

"Kandjeng toean," he panted, "they are running Amokh in the dessa yonder. One bandoelan has been already krissed and a policeman severely wounded."

"Who is running Amokh?" cried Verstork.

"I don't know, kandjeng toean," replied the man. "Women and children are flying about yelling and screaming and I hurried off at once to fetch the Loerah; but as I ran along I heard that Setrosmito is the murderer."

"Setrosmito!" exclaimed Verstork in utter amazement. "What, old Setrosmito? Quite impossible; is it not, Loerah?"

"No, kandjeng toean," was the chief's reply.

"But the man is much too quiet a fellow for that," continued the Controller. "Moreover, he is not given to opium smoking, is he?"

"No kandjeng toean," was the cautious reply.

The screaming still continued, and though it was already growing dusk, people could be distinctly seen running about wildly in the dessa.

"Come, gentlemen," said Verstork to his friends, "my presence is required yonder. Will you come with me? If we make haste we can get there in a minute or two"

"All right," cried the young men with one voice; "lead on, we follow you."

There was but one of the little party who ventured to ask: "Is it quite safe, do you think?"

That man was Mokesuep; but his objection was lost to the others. They had already followed Verstork's example, and digging their spurs in their horses' flanks were tearing along the road to Kaligaweh.

Mokesuep had not, however, made up his mind. He was not quite so rash as that. Dreadful tales of "Amokh runners" were crossing his brain. For a moment or two he stood irresolute not well knowing what he had better do; but just then the shrieks redoubled while the gongs were beaten furiously. That was quite enough for him. Thought he to himself: "In such cases it is most prudent to take care and keep a whole skin." So he turned his horse, gave it the spurs and galloped off to Banjoe Pahit instead of to Kaligaweh.

As they were riding to Kaligaweh, Verstork thought it well to caution his friends by telling them that in cases of Amokh running the thing is to be on one's guard, and that fear and panic only serve to make matters worse and increase the danger. "At all events," said he, "keep your revolvers ready."

His caution was, however, not needed. When the horsemen came racing into the dessa they met a few frightened women clasping their little ones to their breast as if to protect them; but all the men were standing with lance or kris in hand drawn up around a little hut which was closed, and about which there was nothing in any way remarkable.

"If he comes out we must catch him on our lances," was the cry.

"What is all this confusion about?" cried Verstork, leaping from his horse, throwing the bridle to one of the bystanders, and stepping into the ring.

"Setrosmito has been running Amokh," was the reply from all sides.

"Setrosmito, how is it possible?" muttered the Controller, inaudibly.

But scarcely had he uttered the words, before the door of the cabin flew open and Setrosmito appeared on the threshold.

He was an elderly man with grizzly hair which was flying in wild confusion about his head. His jacket was torn to ribbons and a few shreds of it only hung from one of his arms. His face, breast and hands were smeared with blood, so that the poor wretch looked a hideous object.

"There he is, there he is," shouted the mob. "Now look out!"

Every lance-point was at once thrown forward in anticipation of a mad rush.

"I don't wish to hurt anybody," cried Setrosmito, to his fellows of the dessa. "But let no one come near me to lay a hand on me; the first that touches me is a dead man!"

With so frantic a gesture did he wave his kris, and so ghastly did he look in his frenzy, that the crowd rushed back in dismay. Thus Verstork, who the instant before had stood lost in the press, now found himself standing in the foreground.

No sooner, however, had the unfortunate Javanese caught sight of the white man than he cried out in piteous tones,

"Pardon, kandjeng toean, pardon," and hurling his kris from him he flung himself at the Controller's feet. "Pardon, pardon, kandjeng toean!" he cried again and again.

All this had passed with lightning rapidity—so quickly, indeed, that the bystanders scarcely knew what was going on. When the man besmeared with blood had advanced towards the Controller, many thought that the latter's life was in danger. His friends, revolver in hand, rushed forward to protect him, the natives also were springing forward to despatch the now defenceless murderer. But Verstork calmly stopped them, put the foremost back with his hand, and restrained the others by crying out in a tone of command:

"Back, all of you! Keep back from the man. Do you hear?"

And going up to the crouching wretch, who was still crying in an imploring tone of voice "Pardon, kandjeng toean," he said:

"Have you been running Amokh, Setrosmito?"

"Sir," cried the latter, "I have killed a bandoelan who was acting disgracefully towards my child. Yes, I have done that. I have also wounded a policeman who was helping him in it. Who would have protected my child if I had not done so? But I have harmed no one else. The whole dessa will tell you so!"

Verstork looked towards the crowd.

All stood breathless around; not a word of protest was spoken.

"You confess to having killed a bandoelan and wounded an officer?" asked Verstork, sternly.

"Yes, kandjeng toean," said the poor Javanese, almost inaudibly.

"Wedono," said Verstork, "have this man bound."

"Pardon, kandjeng toean, pardon!" cried the wretched man, when he heard the order. "Pardon! I have only protected my daughter from disgusting ill-treatment."

"You have resisted the authorities, nobody has a right to do that," replied the Controller in a firm and impressive voice. "But, Setrosmito," he continued, "the matter will be investigated by the proper tribunal, and if, as you say, your child has suffered ill-usage—no doubt that will be taken into consideration, and your punishment will be lessened accordingly."

A dull murmur arose in the crowd. They knew by sad experience what kind of justice they might expect from the white man when there was opium in the question. A bitter smile was on every countenance, and many a curse was muttered against that unmerciful race which holds sway over Java and sucks its very life's blood. Now that the people began to see that they had to do—not with a wild Amokh runner who murdered indiscriminately but—with a father who had merely protected his child from outrage, the feelings of the crowd instantly changed and not a man or woman in the dessa but pitied the wretched criminal. But a single commanding look from the Controller and one wave of the Wedono's hand sufficed to repress every sign of displeasure.

"Wedono," said Verstork, "you will have that man carefully guarded—you and the Loerah will be answerable for him; and you will further see that to-morrow morning early, he is taken under properly armed escort to Santjoemeh."

"Pardon, kandjeng toean," again groaned the unhappy father, as the people of the dessa helped to tie his arms.

"The 'Higher Court' must decide the matter, Setrosmito," said Verstork, "I may and I can do no more than my duty."

CHAPTER XIV.

A SEARCH FOR OPIUM. WHAT CAME OF IT.

TO return that night to Banjoe Pahit was clearly impossible. Verstork had to hold a preliminary inquiry into the terrible event which had so suddenly disturbed the dessa, and about this investigation, he was determined to set at once, and to conduct it in the thorough and conscientious manner in which he was wont to discharge all his duties. These were the facts which this inquiry brought to light.

At about 5 o'clock in the afternoon, Singomengolo, the opium farmer's trusty spy, and a Chinese bandoelan had made their appearance in the dessa Kaligaweh. They had proceeded straight to the opium-den, where they had to obtain some necessary information from the men in charge of that establishment. When they had learned what they wanted to know, they went to the Loerah's house; but that functionary was not at home, having been called away, as we know, to make the necessary arrangements for the next day's hunting. So the two worthies had betaken themselves to one of the other members of the dessa government, who granted them the assistance of the local police. Accompanied by a couple of policemen, the Chinese bandoelan went to the dwelling of Setrosmito, the father of Baboe Dalima, and when he got there, he signified his intention of searching the premises.

Said he to Setrosmito: "You never visit the store kept by Babah Than Kik Sioe, you never smoke any opium there, nor even purchase any from him. The opium-farmer has, therefore, come to the conclusion that you manage somehow to get hold of smuggled opium. Anyhow, my orders are to search your house, thoroughly."

"I never go to the den to smoke," was the honest old peasant's straightforward reply, "nor do I smoke opium at home; you will find nothing of the kind under my roof. But do as you like!"

Thereupon, the Chinaman and his two policemen were about to enter, when Setrosmito stopped them.

"No, no," said he, very calmly, "wait a bit. Before you begin, I shall have you fellows searched."

And, turning to some of his friends whom the appearance of the bandoelan had brought about the hut, he said: "Sidin and Sariman, just lend a hand to overhaul these fellows."

The opium-hunters were too well used to such treatment to make any serious resistance, and they submitted to the scrutiny—a scrutiny which was conducted most minutely, but which did not result in producing the least trace of opium. When they had been examined thoroughly, Setrosmito allowed the men to enter his dwelling, and to proceed with their visitation of the premises.

The hunt which ensued was merely a repetition of the scene which had, a short time ago, taken place in the wretched cabin of poor Pak Ardjan; but if no opium had been found upon the persons of the searchers, neither did the Chinese bandoelan, nor his men succeed in discovering the slightest trace of contraband goods in any corner of the house. Just as in Pak Ardjan's case, here again they turned over everything, and ransacked every hole and corner; but not the slightest vestige of opium was found in the place.

At length the Chinaman despairing of success, and very angry at his failure, cried out in a rage: "Where are your children?"

Setrosmito quietly answered, "The children are on the common minding the oxen."

An evil smile played upon the yellow features of the bandoelan, when he heard this man actually was the possessor of a pair of oxen.

In the once thriving dessa Kaligaweh, there were, alas! at present very few of the inhabitants who could boast of owning so much as that. He did not, however, speak a single word; but he left the hut taking his two policemen with him, and went to report to Singomengolo that all their trouble had been fruitless.

When Singo had heard his subordinate's statement, he looked with a contemptuous and pitying smile upon him, as he scornfully said to the Chinaman:

"Much use you are to Lim Ho and Lim Yang Bing! You a bandoelan! You will never find smuggled opium," he continued, in a jeering tone, "you are too clumsy."

"No," was the man's indignant reply, "nor you either, where there is no opium to be found!"

"Come, Keh," said Singo. "Will you bet me a rix-dollar that I don't manage to find some?"

"Quite impossible," cried the Chinaman, "I have turned the house inside out. I have searched the bamboo laths of the walls and roof, and there is nothing—absolutely nothing anywhere."

"Have you looked under the hearth?" asked Singomengolo.

"Yes."

"And in the ashes under the hearth?"

"Yes," was the reply again.

"And have you grubbed up the floor?"

"Yes."

"And have you turned over the baleh-baleh and the cushions?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" cried the man, impatiently. "I am no child, I suppose."

"No, you are no child," jeered Singo, "but you are one of the greatest fools in the world; as stupid as one of those oxen! Now, just you come along with me," he added, after having flung these amenities at the head of his pig-tailed countryman. "Just you come along with me and you will see that my eyes are better than yours. You could see nothing; but I shall manage to ferret out something before long. Those mangy dessa-dogs always have opium about them."

The wretch seemed to forget that in that very dessa he had himself first seen the light; however—that is the way of the world!

So the four men set out once again to Setrosmito's house; and once again, as before, did the Javanese attempt to insist upon searching the persons of his unwelcome visitors before allowing them to enter. But Singomengolo would have nothing of the kind. He refused point-blank to submit to any search. Said he, in his blustering way: "You lay your hands on me and I will thrash you like a mangy cur!" Setrosmito tried to protest; but it was in vain. "Aye, aye," said he, "if that be the case then I have but little doubt that they will find anything they want. I know all about those tricks. Kabajan," he continued, as he turned to one of the chief men of the dessa, who stood looking on among the crowd which was rapidly assembling. "Kabajan, I call upon you to witness what is about to happen here."

But the latter, who had the greatest horror of coming into collision with the wretches of the opium monopoly, made no reply whatever to the old man's appeal, and quietly slipped away.

Singomengolo, with a brutal and defiant laugh, entered the hut with his followers. It so happened that at the moment, Setrosmito's little children also came in. The two boys and their sister had just returned from the common, and opened their eyes wide at seeing so many people assembled round their father's house. The two boys were eight and nine years of age. Like most of the young Javanese children, they had pretty little faces, with the funniest expression in their twinkling and roguish dark-brown eyes; but their appearance was, to a European eye, wholly spoilt by the manner in which their heads had been treated. They were clean shaven except one single tuft of hair of about a hand's breadth, which the razor

had spared and which one of the boys wore on the top of his head, and the other over his left ear. They had the well-formed and supple limbs which are characteristic of their race, and were exceedingly slender in the waist. These natural advantages were seen to the greatest advantage since, in accordance with the primitive customs of the island, they ran about completely naked, with nothing on at all except a silver ring round each ankle. The little girl, a child of seven, was remarkably pretty, her well-formed childish face peeping out charmingly under a profusion of jet-black glossy hair. Her arms were bare, and the only clothing she wore was a bright-coloured patchwork apron which was secured round the hips by a slender chain of silver, from which dangled a small ornamental plate of the same metal. When they ran into the hut they found Singomengolo very busy indeed turning over the contents of boxes and prying into pots and pans, while their father was most carefully watching every gesture he made, and was not allowing a single motion of his nimble hands to pass unnoticed. This close attention vexed the wretched spy beyond measure, who thus saw his wicked plan frustrated, because, while those keen eyes were upon his fingers, he could not even attempt to exercise his sleight of hand without being instantly detected. In the hope therefore of distracting the father's attention, Singo made a sign to the Chinaman, who, with his slanting eyes, sat looking at the children and leering most offensively at pretty little Kembang. The man understood the signal and at once seized one of the boys, and, under the pretence of searching for concealed opium, he felt all over their little bodies, under the armpits, in fact, anywhere wherever a little mandat-ball could by any possibility lie hidden. The boys kicked and fought under this disgusting treatment and did all they could to bite and scratch the dirty scoundrel; but not a single cry did they utter which might draw away their father's eyes from the manipulations of Singomengolo. But when the bandoelan laid hold of the girl and strove to tear off her apron, the poor child could not repress a loud cry of terror, she tore herself away from his rude grasp, and flying to her mother, tried to hide herself on her breast, while the poor woman clasped her child in her arms as if to protect it from further insult. It was, however, in vain; the Chinaman with his sickly yellow face came up to the mother and, with the help of his two assistants, wrenched the poor girl from the woman's arms, who was wholly unable to resist their violence.

“Your turn next,” cried the Chinaman to the mother, “that young cat has had plenty of time to pass the stuff to you. Keep your seat!”

Then the disgusting scene through which the two boys had passed was re-enacted on this helpless child—a proceeding infinitely more loathsome, inasmuch as its victim was a little creature of the tender sex towards whom the wretch thought he might with impunity act as he pleased.

“Alla tobat!” screamed the poor woman who was compelled to see her daughter thus outraged wantonly before her eyes.

That bitter cry of distress had the desired effect. For a single instant it caused Setrosmito to turn his watchful eyes to his wife; but that single instant was sufficient. Quick as lightning Singomengolo took advantage of it, and slipped his closed hand under the little Pandan mat which was spread out over the baleh-baleh and which, during the search, had already three or four times been lifted and shaken without result. Then, in triumph, he produced from under it a little copper box, and, as he held it up with a theatrical gesture he exclaimed:

“You see that; after all, there was smuggled opium in the house; I knew I should find it!”

Setrosmito turned deadly pale at the sight; he well knew what the Dutch law-courts had in store for him, and the thought of the ruin which thus stared him in the face filled him with rage and fury.

“There was no opium concealed here,” he cried out; and in his despair not well knowing what he was doing, he put his hand out mechanically to the kris, an old heirloom which was stuck into the bamboo-wall above the baleh-baleh.

“You dirty dog,” he cried to Singomengolo, “it was you yourself that slipped that box under the mat!”

The words had scarcely passed his lips before Singomengolo answered the frantic accusation by a blow with his clenched fist which struck Setrosmito right in the mouth. Maddened with pain and rage the unhappy man plucked the kris from its sheath; but at that moment, suddenly, little Kembang uttered a heartrending scream of pain and horror. That cry saved the life of the opium spy. The poor father looked round as if bewildered at the sound; but when he saw the disgusting leer upon the Chinaman's face and in what an outrageously indecent manner that wretch was treating his pretty little flower, the blood seemed to rush to his head and his rage was at once turned into another direction. A red mist—red as blood—clouded his eyes.

“Help, help, pain, pain!” cried poor little Kembang.

Utterly blinded and wholly beside himself with fury the father, kris in hand, flew towards the miscreant.

“Amokh, Amokh!” shouted one of the policemen, as he saw the flaming kris in the frenzied father's hand.

“Amokh, Amokh!” cried the crowd outside taking up the shout without knowing what was going on inside the hut. Women and children rushed away yelling and screaming in all directions. Soon on all sides resounded the fatal words:

“Amokh, Amokh!”

The men flew home to fetch their lances and krisses, not in the least knowing what really was the matter, but at the mere terror of the sound.

“Amokh, Amokh!” repeated the watchmen as they rushed wildly to the guardhouse and began to make as much noise as they could upon the public gongs.

The policeman who had been the first to cry Amokh, made a frantic effort to draw his sabre; but the blade was so firmly rusted into the sheath that no efforts he could make would draw the weapon. The other policeman who had no time to draw tried to lays hands upon the infuriated Javanese; but as he attempted to seize him, he received a slash across the face and breast which was no doubt but a deep flesh wound; but though not mortal, occasioned so much pain and so much bleeding that the wounded man fell back moaning and was glad enough to save his life in headlong flight. The sight was quite enough for his comrade, and he also took to his heels at full speed.

Then Setrosmito found himself face to face with the ill-starred Chinaman, who had not let go his hold on the little girl and concerning whose outrageous behaviour there could be not the slightest doubt.

“Let her go! let her go, I say!” yelled the father, mad with rage and foaming at the mouth. Whether the bandoelan was utterly bewildered in the presence of such imminent peril, or whether, in his excitement, he did not realise the full extent of the danger; suffice it to say that he did not obey that supreme command. His wan face now made more than usually hideous by passion, wore a vacant and unmeaning smile; still he did not release the girl; but only tried to get her in front of him, and to shield himself behind her.

"Amokh, Amokh!" was still the cry all around.

"Let go!" roared Setrosmito, again; and again the wretched Chinaman replied with a vacant laugh.

"Amokh, Amokh!" resounded the gong with threatening roar.

"Let go!—You won't!—Well then, die like a dog!—" shrieked the wretched father, goaded to madness. And—with lightning speed, before the miserable Chinaman had time to cower down behind the little girl whom he still held before him—Setrosmito drew the well-tempered blade across the fellow's throat.

"Alas, I am dead!" yelled the Chinaman, his eyes wildly rolling in his head. They were the last words he uttered. With convulsive clutch he tried to close the gaping wound in his neck; but it was no use, the blood violently came spirting in fine jets through his fingers, a dreadful fit of coughing seized him, and the torrent of blood which rushed from his mouth covered poor little Kembang from head to foot. Tottering like a drunken man, and still grasping the girl, the wretch, for a few moments, tried to steady himself, but then reeled and fell heavily to the ground in the agony of death.

"Amokh, Amokh!" was still the cry all round the hut.

"Amokh, Amokh!" still harshly roared the gongs.

For three or four seconds Setrosmito, after his dreadful deed, stood gazing about him like a man utterly dazed or in a dream. He at length brought his left hand to his eyes and then slowly he seemed to recover his reason; then he began to realize his position. At his feet there lay the Chinese bandoelan still convulsively twitching in the throes of death; but soon all was over.

All this had passed in an incredibly short space of time, almost with the swiftness of thought; but the room in which the father stood over the victim of his momentary frenzy was already quite deserted; for, with his men, Singomengolo had also taken to his heels. Even the two little boys, who at first had stared at the spectacle hardly knowing what was taking place, had taken to flight in alarm at their father's threatening kris, and the wife had snatched up her little daughter and she also had rushed from the house.

"Amokh, Amokh!" that shout outside sounded in the ears of the unhappy man as his death-knell. He knew but too well of what terrible significance was the fatal word. He knew well that wherever that word is heard, the entire population rushes at once to arms, and that, without stopping to make any inquiry, without even knowing who the man-slayer is, it cuts him down without the smallest mercy, though perhaps he may in reality be guilty of nothing worse than merely defending his own life or protecting the honour of wife or children.

Already a few armed men came charging into the hut with their lance-points levelled at his breast.

"Stand back!" shouted Setrosmito whose rage had not yet had time to cool down. "Stand back! whoever comes nearer I will serve as I have served that wretch!"

The man was evidently in deadly earnest and the kris was waved in so threatening a manner at the words that his assailants turned and fled in alarm and formed up in a close ring around the hut. In that circle there was a great deal of talking, of consulting, of screaming and gesticulating; but there seemed not to be a single man who felt the smallest desire of again crossing the threshold.

It was at this juncture that Controller Verstork came galloping up with the gentlemen who accompanied him and, as we have heard, put an end to the murderous scene by taking the ill-fated man prisoner.

In the course of the inquiry which followed Singomengolo produced the opium which he declared he had found in Setrosmito's house and which, in the interest of the opium-farmer, he had confiscated.

In the small copper-box there was but a very small quantity of the poppy-juice which, when weighed at the opium store, was found to be but fifty matas, that is about eighteen milligrams. It was a brownish sticky mass enclosed in a tiny box which could be easily concealed in the closed palm of a man's hand. The Controller took possession of the box and in the presence of the opium-hunter he sealed it up according to the law.

"Did anyone witness the finding of this box under the mat on the baleh-baleh?" asked Verstork.

"Oh yes, certainly," was the reply, "the Chinese bandoelan saw me find it."

"The man who is dead? Anyone else?" continued the Controller.

"Yes, the two policemen," said Singo.

"Indeed!" remarked Verstork. "These were the men, I think, who, a few moments before could discover nothing?"

"No matter," said the opium spy with great effrontery. "I, kandjeng toean," he continued, "am a sworn bandoelan—I found it there and my word suffices. The testimony of the policemen is altogether superfluous."

The look of utter contempt and loathing which Verstork cast upon him as he spoke seemed to have but little effect upon the shameless spy; for he merely made the usual obsequious salute and as he turned to go, he muttered:

"I shall go and make my report to Babah Lim Yang Bing and to the Inspector of Police."

Then he mounted his horse and rode away seemingly along the high-road to Santjoemeh. Seemingly; for presently it will appear whither he actually did go and what business he had on hand.

As soon as he was out of sight of the dessa he took a pathway to the right which ran through the rice-fields and along that bridle-path he rode across the hilly country and thus took a more direct way to the capital than that which the highway offered. His horse seemed to know the country well and made good progress, so that it was hardly midnight when he reached a lonely little cabin. There he dismounted, knocked up its inmate and sent the man on with a message to Santjoemeh.

When Verstork reached the house of the Loerah who with the Wedono had actively assisted him in his troublesome inquiry, it was about nine o'clock in the evening.

He found his friends assembled there and impatiently awaiting his arrival.

"I say," muttered August van Beneden, "how long you have kept us!"

The young barrister was not in the best of tempers just then for he had been very anxiously looking forward to the promised expedition and now he began to fear that it might not come off at all. Moreover he had, in the Loerah's house, been frightfully bored as he waited for his friend's return.

"I say, how long you have kept us!"

"It was no fault of mine," replied Verstork. "I have had my hands pretty full to-night."

"Besides," he continued, "it makes no great difference; for the more I can get through to-night the less I shall have to do in the morning."

"In the morning?" said another of the company in no agreeable surprise.

"Yes, of course," said Verstork. "Supposing for a moment that in order to keep you company, I had not held that inquiry this evening; but had ridden back with you to Banjoe Pahit as we proposed to do, why—then I must have gone through it all to-morrow morning and then we must have said good-bye to our hunting party."

"To-morrow morning!" echoed Edward van Rheijn. "Would not Monday morning have done just as well?"

The Controller gave the young man a look which evidently was full of displeasure. He had indeed a sharp answer on the tip of his tongue; but he refrained from uttering it, and very quietly replied:

"No, no, Monday would have been too late in a matter of this kind. Remember, we have to do with a case of manslaughter which is moreover complicated by an opium scandal, and as matters stand even now we shall find this a sufficiently perplexing business."

"And are you quite ready now?" asked van Rheijn.

"Yes," replied the other.

"So that to-morrow morning there will be nothing to detain you?"

"All right, all right!" said Verstork somewhat impatiently.

"And you will be able to take the lead in our expedition, I hope."

"Yes, yes, you need not trouble about that, I have only a couple of letters to write."

"A couple of letters!" cried van Rheijn but half reassured.

"A short report," said the Controller, "to the Resident, and a request to the native prosecutor and to the doctor to come and view the body and to hold the inquest."

"Is not that right, van Nerekool?" continued he, turning to his friend. "That is the proper course to take, is it not?"

"What did you say?" said the young lawyer starting up as from a dream, and passing his hand over his forehead;—lost in anxious thought he had hardly heard his friend's question.

The question was repeated and received an affirmative answer.

"We have a good long ride before us to get back to Banjoe Pahit," remarked Theodoor Grenits, "and to-morrow morning it will be light very early, eh?"

"Certainly it will," replied Verstork; "but," continued he as he looked at his watch, "we must not think of getting back to Banjoe Pahit to-night. It is now quite nine o'clock, and, however brightly the moon may be shining we cannot possibly go faster than at a walk, so that we cannot expect to reach the Controller's quarters before midnight. No, I shall write my official letters here at the tjarik's, they can then be at once sent off by the Loerah. The Wedono will ride back to Banjoe Pahit to get everything ready for to-morrow's work. He has the command of all the beaters there, that has been all arranged and settled and we need not trouble about that, even though we change our quarters for the night."

"That is all very well," said August van Beneden, "but where shall we find these quarters?"

"Well," rejoined Verstork, "we must do the best we can, 'à la guerre comme à la guerre.' There is a small passangrahan here in the dessa which is furnished with a single baleh baleh and we must ask the Loerah to fit it up for us somehow or other."

"To fit it up?" cried Grenits in surprise; "have you an outfitting store here in this out-of-the-way place?"

"No, no, my worthy disciple of Mercury," replied Verstork with a laugh, "that kind of establishment would do but a very poor business here. If we can lay our hands upon a few pillows and a couple of mattresses we must think ourselves very lucky."

"A couple of mattresses for the seven of us," grumbled van Beneden who was by no means unmindful of his bodily comforts, "that is but a poor allowance I fear."

"For my part," said Verstork, "I am quite ready to give up my share. I prefer the baleh baleh. It will not be the first time I have slept on one; and slept very soundly too I can tell you. The others must draw lots. But—"

"But what?" asked van Rheijn.

"Someone just now spoke of seven," replied Verstork. "It seems to me we are but six—Who is missing? The deuce! where is Mokesuep?"

"Yes," cried a couple of others, "where has Mokesuep got to?"

"He was off like a shot as soon as he heard the cry of Amokh," said van Rheijn laughing. "I saw him when we turned for Kaligaweh riding back full speed to Banjoe Pahit."

"Now, I call that prudence with a vengeance," remarked Grenits.

"Prudence! Is that the right word do you think?" asked one of the others.

"I don't care," said van Rheijn, "I am heartily glad we have got rid of the fellow, for the time, at all events. I say, Verstork, how in the world did you manage to get hold of such a sneak as that?"

"Oh," replied Verstork, "I often find the fellow useful. He is thoroughly up, you see, in all excise quibbles; and I think it best to keep in with him. You can all understand that—can you not?"

"Well," said van Rheijn, "I wish he would be off altogether and go right on to Santjoemeh."

"No," said Verstork, "I don't think he will do that."

"Wedono, will you see to it that Mr. Mokesuep is called early to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, kandjeng toean," replied the native.

"And now, gentlemen," said Verstork, "I must leave you for half an hour or so to the care of the Loerah, he will make you as comfortable as he can—won't you, Loerah?"

"Yes, kandjeng toean," was the invariable reply.

A few minutes later the sportsmen had taken possession of the passangrahan, while the Controller sat in the small verandah of the tjarik's house busily writing his letters.

CHAPTER XV.

UNDER THE WARIENGIEN TREE. IN THE OPIUM-DEN.

THE passangrahan did not turn out so very bad after all. The Loerah had managed to get together six mattresses and, somewhere or other, he had found six pillows also. Whether these things were clean or not, the miserable flicker of the little oil-lamp which hung in the middle of the apartment, did not reveal. The Loerah, however, had surpassed himself—he had actually provided six chairs. Very crazy and very tumble-down certainly they were; but they were not wholly unfit for use, and in a dessa like Kaligaweh might be looked upon as "objets de luxe."

But the young people did not feel the slightest inclination to turn in, they were as yet too much excited by the events they had just witnessed to think of going to sleep. So they brought out the chairs upon the aloon aloon in front of the passangrahan, and having seated themselves in a circle they made themselves as comfortable as circumstances would allow and lit their manillas. There was, of course, no question of getting anything to drink in the shape of wine or beer, still less possibility was there of obtaining a glass of grog. Unless there are Europeans settled in a dessa, such liquors are nowhere to be found. But the Loerah had supplied for the refreshment of his guests an ample quantity of cocoa-nut milk, and that drink was pronounced most excellent. Indeed it is a most delicious and very refreshing beverage when it is obtained from a young nut before the flesh has had time to set and harden inside the rind.

Very soon the little circle of friends was comfortably seated under a gigantic Wariengien tree, the tall branches of which spreading out far and wide on all sides formed a canopy which covered nearly the entire space of the aloon aloon, and offered a most grateful shade by day, and a shelter also against the heavy dews of night.

From the majority of the horizontal branches there grew down a number of shoots, some as thick as a man's finger, others no thicker than a pipestem, others again as fine as whipcord. These shoots, as soon as they reached the soil, struck root and then rapidly increasing in girth, formed, as it were, a number of pillars which helped the old giant to bear his dense mass of wood and of foliage, and greatly enhanced the beauty of the venerable tree.

The firmament above was of the deepest blue, and wonderfully pure and clear. In that vault of Heaven innumerable stars glittered and twinkled in spite of the moon which, now about her full, was shedding over the peaceful scene her soft and placid radiance.

But nature, though so calm and placid, was by no means silent. The air was full of sounds, the strange mysterious music of a tropical night. A gentle breeze was rustling in the branches, and amidst the countless leaves of the colossal wild fig-tree was thus forming, so to speak, the groundwork of a concert produced by a host of invisible artists. In spite of the late nightly hour, a wood-pigeon would now and then come flying home into the crown of the Wariengien tree, and be welcomed on its return by the soft cooing of its mate. Sometimes a solitary cock would start up and, beguiled by the bright moonbeams, would utter his shrill musical crow, fondly imagining, no doubt, that he was heralding the dawn of day. Every moment was heard the sharp, piercing squeak of the swarm of bats, which, in their hunt for insects under the canopy of leaves, glided about in a giddy maze of intersecting and intertwining circles, ovals, spirals and ellipses. Sometimes again from afar came the dismal cry of the flying dogs, as on soft inaudible wing they swooped down upon some fruit-tree in the dessa and quarrelled for the possession of some choice manga. But all these sounds, some musical, others harsh, might be looked upon as the solo-parts in the nameless humming concert which prevailed on all sides and of which the performers were invisible to human eye. In that nightly hour, wherever the ear might turn it heard a constant quivering and throbbing sound, sometimes rising to such a pitch that it unpleasantly affected the ear, then again dying away like the scarcely perceptible murmur of the breeze in a cornfield, and then suddenly ceasing for a moment or two as if to allow the rustling of the leaves to be heard for an instant; but only to join in chorus again with renewed vigour as if wishing to drown all other sounds. This was the chirping of millions upon millions of the greenish orange kind of grasshopper, which perched on every blade of grass on the aloon aloon, and hanging from every leaf of the immense tree, caused that sharp thrilling mass of sound which at times made the air literally quiver with its intensely sharp notes.

Did the young men there assembled pay any heed to this mysterious melody? Did they lend an ear to those notes which, in the tropics, make the midnight hour more tuneful than the dull and heavy noon, when the sun, in his full power, makes all nature thirsty and silent? Had they an eye for that delicious night, with its soft breeze, its glittering firmament, its quiet but glorious moonlight, its quaint and pleasing shadows? It is doubtful whether they heard or saw anything of all these. Indeed, they were wholly engrossed in conversation, and that conversation most naturally ran upon the events of the day. The dreadful scene of social misery at which they had been present was far too powerful to be dismissed from their thoughts. That murder scene was talked over and turned about, and looked at from every point of view; but, the few hurried words with which Verstork, before he went off to write his letters, had explained the matter to his friends, had filled them, one and all, with the deepest pity for poor Setrosmito, and for his family, in their bitter affliction.

Said Grashuis: "What untold misery does that detestable opium-policy bring upon this, in other respects, so richly blessed island? Is it not enough to make one hide one's head with shame at the thought that a considerable portion of the Dutch revenue is derived from so foul a source?"

"Tut, tut," interrupted van Beneden, "that foul source, as you call it—I suppose you mean the opium-revenue—is in no way different from any other tax levied on an article of luxury."

"Granted," replied Grashuis, "but, who made the inhabitants of the Indian Archipelago acquainted with that luxury?"

"That's more than I can tell you," said the other. "I daresay it is with opium very much as it is with drink; whence did we get the products of distillation? Who first discovered them? I fancy it would be no easy matter to find a satisfactory answer to those questions. One thing, however, is quite certain, that the Dutch nation is not responsible for the discovery of opium."

"That's true enough," replied Grashuis, "but I hardly think that a mere negative certificate of that kind will be accepted as a proof of good conduct."

"No, certainly not," interrupted Grenits, "for our conscience, though it is clear of the charge of having discovered the drug, by no means acquits us of the more serious charge of having introduced and imported it, and—"

"Come, that's all nonsense," cried van Rheijn, "that is a mere assertion of yours, which will not stand the test of inquiry. If you will look into Band's well-known 'Proeve,' there you will find that the Orientals, such as the Turks, the Persians, the Arabians, and the Hindoos, have been for many, for very many centuries, addicted to the use of opium. It is, therefore, most probable that when the Dutch first came to India, they found the habit of opium-smoking already established."

"You are quite wrong, my worthy friend," cried Grenits, interrupting him. "You are quite wrong, for this same Band, whose authority on the subject I am as ready to admit as you are, expressly declares that he has not been able to discover when opium began to be used in Dutch India. Now, this confession is, in my opinion, most significant, coming from so distinguished a statesman as Band. For, surely, if he had been able to prove in his treatise on opium, that its use was common when we first arrived there, he would, for the sake of our national honour, not have concealed so important a fact, but, on the contrary, have made the most of it. But I go further than this. Later on in his book, Band goes on to say that when in the sixteenth century Europeans first began to show themselves in Indian waters, the use of opium was known only in the Moluccas, and that, as regards the rest of the Archipelago, its abuse existed only among a very few foreigners, who had settled down in the different sea-ports."

"Well," asked van Rheijn, "but must we not look upon that as the expression of a mere private opinion? What do you say?" he continued, turning to van Nerekool. "Band, you see, was an opponent of the use of opium."

Van Nerekool was, however, wholly engrossed in his own thoughts, and made no reply to the question. He seemed, indeed, not to have heard it at all.

Grenits, however, at once broke in and said:

"What? Band an opponent of opium? Where in the world did you get that from? Certainly not out of his book, which throughout is written in a spirit of the strictest impartiality. He cannot help mentioning the deleterious effect of the poppy-juice; but he does so with the utmost caution, and I defy anyone to discover in his treatise the merest hint at a scheme, or even at a proposal for counteracting its abuse. Just now you called Band's opinion a personal one. Well, so far as the introduction of opium is concerned, no doubt that opinion is personal; but, it is an opinion which has been confirmed by the testimony of a host of distinguished travellers of his day. Read, for instance, the voyages of such men as van Sinschoten, Cornelis Houtman, Wijbrandt, van Warwijck, and so many others, all countrymen of ours, and illustrious men of our heroic age, and you will find that Band does not, by any means, stand alone in his opinion."

"I say," cried van Rheijn, not too civilly, "where the devil does a merchant like you get all that information from?"

The discussion was, in fact, arousing some of that jealous feeling which everywhere exists between the official and the mercantile classes; but which is stronger, perhaps, in Dutch India than elsewhere.

Grenits replied very quietly, "It is precisely in my capacity of merchant that I have found it necessary to study, not only all the products of the Archipelago, but to gain all possible information also about the imported articles of commerce which are likely to produce the greatest profits."

"That is exactly what opium does," remarked van Rheijn, "and, for that reason, I presume that the trade would like to get it into its own hands."

"What the trade may like or may not like," replied Grenits very coolly, "I neither know nor care. As far as I myself am concerned, I would not, if I could, derive any profits from so foul a source; and I feel quite certain that many, very many men in my position are of the same opinion. As a proof of the truth of my words, I point to the fact that, as far as I know, no European firm has ever made a bid for the opium monopoly."

"Indeed," said van Rheijn, sarcastically, "and how then about the Netherland's Handelmaatshappij?"

"The Handelmaatshappij," replied Grenits, "is a very recent offshoot of the East India Company of unblessed memory, and is entirely identified with the government. It is, as a matter of fact, nothing more than the shopman in the government's grocery store. The opium monopoly is carried on by the State, and it is, therefore, no wonder that the 'Companie ketjil' (Javanese name for the Handelmaatshappij) did undertake the supplying of opium. But this European Company did not long occupy the honourable position of opium-farmer. According to Band, the government did not make sufficiently large profits out of the monopoly, and it was therefore decided to put it into Chinese hands. These Chinamen knew how to carry on the abominable traffic, and have brought it to the highest degree of development. Looking at the question from another point of view, and considering the names of the men who at that time were members and directors of the Handelmaatshappij, I cannot help thinking that men so illustrious were not at all sorry to see so dirty a source of profit closed to them."

"What are you talking about!" exclaimed van Rheijn, "with your 'dirty source of profit?' Does not the Company trade in gin? Does not your own firm deal in alcohol? And you, when you get to be head of a firm, will you give up all trade in spirits. and all the profits it brings in?"

"Oh," cried Grenits, "now I see! you are one of those many men who place abuse of opium on the same line with abuse of strong drink. But, mark what I say, all those who, whether here or in Holland, argue thus. are doing infinitely more mischief than they are aware of. Some few of them, no doubt, know the real merits of the case, and are perfectly competent, therefore, to measure the mischief they are doing. All such men are actuated by personal motives; they have a certain object in view, it may be of advantage or of ambition. But by far the greater number speak thus merely to please, merely to gain the approbation of their hearers. The good people in Holland like to listen to such arguments. They are pleased when they hear men who have been in India, and therefore, of course, know all about it, say, with an air of easy superiority: 'Oh, that opium is not so very great an evil after all. All over the world, man sometimes needs a little stimulant. Just look at our good Mr. Pastor, he surely has the welfare of his flock at heart, yet he does not grudge a man a modest glass or two of gin. Let us follow that spiritual example, and let us not grudge the poor Javanese his opium-pipe. Opium and gin, why they come to very much the same thing in the end!' Yes, to such arguments men open their ears willingly enough; for, though the opium monopoly may be a dirty source of revenue, yet it does bring in lots of money; and men are only too pleased to hear, that after all they have been needlessly disquieting themselves, and that there is really no need of putting an end to so considerable a source of gain."

"Well, my good friend Grenits, you must pardon me for saying so; but I also am one of those who not only silently approve of the argument, but who are prepared openly and loudly to maintain that gin and opium, inasmuch as they are both intoxicants, stand on precisely the same level. I maintain that the abuse of either is injurious, and that the one does not much more harm than the other."

It was August van Beneden who thus came to the rescue of van Rheijn. The latter looked round triumphantly, as he exclaimed:

"Hear, hear! You see, gentlemen, I am not the only one who holds those views. Bravo, August!"

"Of course," said Grenits, quickly, "you are quite right in saying that spirituous liquors are injurious for—"

"I say, Grenits," cried Grashuis, with a laugh, "mind the members of your club at the Hague don't hear that."

"For," continued Grenits, without paying any heed to the interruption, "for the abuse of spirits also arises from a craving after pleasure and oblivion and proves a want of will-power to resist that craving, even when its satisfaction is purchased at the price of self-respect, domestic happiness and health. To deny that, would be to prove myself ignorant of the labours of Father Matthew, and so many other friends of total abstinence.

But, you will pardon me if I adhere to the opinion I have already expressed, that in thus placing the abuse of opium on the same level with the abuse of alcohol shows an ignorance of established facts and an ignorance also of the literature of our colonies with regard to opium. For, remember, my friends, our own countrymen, such men as van Linschoten, Valentijn, Band, van Dedem and I do not know how many more stigmatise opium as an aphrodisiac—as a powerful means of exciting unclean passions. Van Linschoten in the account of his travels, plainly speaks of certain effects of the abuse of opium which, though we are men together here, I could not venture to repeat; and foreign travellers most fully confirm his testimony. The learned Chinaman Li Schi Ischin in his Chinese Pharmacopœia, which was written as early as 1596, tells us that the common people in China, made use of opium chiefly as an aphrodisiac. The German traveller van Miclucho Macclay in 1873, after he had made personal experiments at Hong Kong in opium smoking, has noted down certain details with which I cannot bring myself to pollute your ears. Now all this ought, I think, to give us much food for reflection. And when we find men like Rochussen, Loudon, Hasselman, van Bosse, and many others, who, the one as Governor General, and the other as Colonial Secretary, some of them in both capacities, have stood up in their place in parliament, and have openly spoken of opium as an evil, as a most terrible evil, indeed as a poison and a pest, why then, I think, it will not be very difficult to come to the conclusion, that the effects and the consequences of the abuse of opium are of a different nature altogether, and are infinitely more fatal than those which result from the abuse of alcohol."

"Would you not like," said van Beneden, "just merely for the sake of experiment, to try opium smoking? I, for myself, very much wish to know what its effects really are."

"So would I," said van Rheijn, "and we could make the experiment easily enough."

"How so?" asked Grashuis. "For us Europeans, opium is not easy to get, and surely we could not go to the opium den and smoke there, and make ourselves a laughing-stock of the people."

"No, we could hardly do that," said van Rheijn; "but among my acquaintances, I count one Lim Ho the son of the great opium-farmer. I know, if I ask him, he will procure me a few madat balls."

"Contraband, I suppose," said Grenits, with a laugh. "You know those opium farmers are the greatest smugglers!"

"What does that matter?" said van Rheijn. "Opium is opium I suppose; I shall, no doubt, be able to get a pipe, and as soon as I have got the things, I will let you know, and then we shall meet at my house. We shall draw lots, and the one upon whom the lot falls, shall submit himself to the experiment, while the others look on, and make notes. Is that a bargain?"

"Aye, aye!" they all cried, all except van Nerekool, who was still abstracted, and deeply plunged in his own thoughts.

"Meanwhile," continued van Rheijn, "I feel bound in fairness to confess that our friend Grenits has defended his position in a most masterly way. Indeed I must say that I had not expected to find so much knowledge in matters concerning the opium monopoly, in a commercial man."

Grenits merely smiled, it was a bitter smile; but he was too much accustomed to such remarks from members of the official corps to take offence at them.

"But," continued van Rheijn, "with all his arguments, he will never persuade me that opium is a cause of greater misery, and that opium is a greater curse to a country than strong drink."

While this discussion had been going on, Verstork had written his reports and had sent them off to the authorities at Santjoemeh, and he had got back to the passangrahan in time to hear Grenits speak of the evils of opium smoking. He also heard his friend van Rheijn make his last assertion. He thereupon at once put in his word.

"Well, gentlemen," said he, "we have just now the fairest possible opportunity of satisfying ourselves as to the truth of Mr. Grenits' argument. The opportunity is, in fact, too good to be neglected. You are here in one of the most wretched of all dessas which are the victims of the opium-monopoly. It is not very long ago that this same Kaligaweh was remarkable as one of the cleanest, neatest, and most prosperous of all our Javanese villages. Now, look round about you. Everything is neglected, and is falling into decay. The huts are, almost all, tumbling to ruin—the roads, which lead to the dessa, and which run through it, are mere pools of mud, and of the well-trimmed and beautiful hedges, which once separated these roads from the fields, not a vestige now remains. It is hardly ten o'clock as yet, and the opium-den is not yet closed. The inhabitants, moreover, are in a state of excitement owing to that murder, and are also disturbed by the presence of so many European gentlemen. They are, therefore, wide awake. In the opium-den you will be able to feast your eyes, and satisfy your curiosity."

At the proposal all the young men had jumped to their feet—all but van Nerekool who, with his head still resting on his hand, seemed unconscious of what was going on around him.

"Come, Charles," said Verstork, laying his hand on his friend's shoulder, "come, Charles, you will come along with us, won't you?"

The young lawyer started as if awakened out of a dream.

"Where are you going to?" asked he, with so genuine an air of surprise, as made it evident that he had not heard one word of what was going on around him.

Said Verstork, "We are off to the opium-den."

"To the opium-den!" cried van Nerekool, in a tone of alarm, "to the opium-den, surely you are not going—"

"To smoke," said Verstork. "No, no, my friend, you need not be alarmed, we are only going to have a look. But," continued he, "gentlemen, you must make up your minds to see some very unpleasant sights, for, I think, to-night the den happens to be very full.

"But, wait a bit, if you intend really to gain some insight into these opium matters, we must—"

And, turning to one of the policemen who was always in attendance, he said:

"Sariman, run and call the two Chinamen of the opium-store—tell them I want to speak to them, at once."

"Very well, kandjeng toean."

"One moment, gentlemen! otherwise you would miss the most interesting part of the show."

They had but a very short time to wait, for the two Chinamen came running up as soon as they received the message:

"Come, quick, quick, the noble noble lord calls you!"

When the Chinamen reached the group, Verstork said to his friends:

"Now, then, gentlemen, let us go."

"But," said one of the Chinamen, in a somewhat insolent tone of voice, when he saw that his presence was wholly ignored, "But you sent for us, sir."

"Hold your tongue, babah," said Verstork, briefly; "we are going to pay a visit to your opium-den. You come along with us."

"To the opium-den!" cried the babah, "then I will go, and—"

"You stay here with me; both of you," said the Controller in a tone of authority which they dared not disobey.

The two Celestials interchanged looks; but they did not utter one word, and silently followed the gentlemen.

The opium-den at Kaligaweh lay behind the chapel at the eastern extremity of the aloon-aloon. The visitors, therefore, had but a couple of hundred yards to walk before they reached that noble establishment licensed by the Dutch rulers of the soil.

No, certainly, it was not a proud building, raising its head majestically, in the glorious consciousness of being one of the many suckers which replenish the Dutch exchequer. Not at all. Its outward appearance would not lead anyone to suspect that it was one of the conduits of the great opium monopoly—that fearful force—that section pump, which pours millions upon millions into the treasury.

No, a thousand times, no! It was a squalid, filthy little bamboo building, which looked like an old tumble-down barn or shed. The walls were partially rotten by long neglect, and gave out the peculiar musty smell of decaying bamboo. The roof, bulging in here and there, threatened to fall in upon the heads of the visitors within. The entire structure was a picture of decay and desolation, and the inside of the den completely corresponded with its pitiful exterior. The space within those mouldy walls and that half-rotten roof was extremely low, and the damp atmosphere was not only stuffy and close, but was permeated with the offensive sickly sweetish smell which is the invariable and unmistakable characteristic of burning opium. The floor of the den was the bare ground and the soil had not even been levelled and beaten down as is the case in almost all Javanese cabins; but was most uneven, great black lumps sticking up all over it which the bare feet of the Javanese and the hard soles of the Chinamen had polished till they looked shining as marble.

Here and there, the smoky gleam of a dirty petroleum lamp revealed a wet patch or a little pool of greenish brown water of most suspicious appearance which affected most unpleasantly the organs both of sight and smell.

As the gentlemen were about to enter the low door of the den, one of the Chinamen tried to utter a note of warning; but Verstork, who was keeping an eye on him, would not let him utter a sound and in a threatening tone of voice whispered to him:

"Be quiet, babah."

When the visitors had entered they found themselves in a small square apartment at the end of which was a partition with two doors and a small opening.

"That door," said the Controller, who acted as guide, pointing to one of them, "opens into a little room in which one of the storekeepers generally sits, and through that little square opening hands to the customers bits of red paper covered with Chinese characters. The buyers of opium have to pay ready money for one of these tickets which represents a greater or smaller quantity of tjandoe according to the price paid. With that bit of paper the purchaser then vanishes through that other door."

"What a beastly hole, to be sure!" remarked Grenits.

"Oh!" replied Verstork, "this is only the anteroom. Wait until you get inside and then you will see something much better than this."

Thus speaking he pushed open the second bamboo door which did not turn on hinges but was fastened to the door-post with loops and ran squeaking and scraping along a bit of smooth wood. This door gave access to a narrow passage which would have been in total darkness but for the hazy light of a few wretched oil-wicks which could only just be seen glimmering, through the chinks of the bamboo partition on either side. In this passage the atmosphere was still more stuffy and the nasty smell of the madat still more nauseous. The floor of the passage was so uneven, so slippery and so indescribably filthy, that it required the greatest care to keep on one's legs at all, and to prevent oneself from slipping down full length into the soapy mud. This passage ran down the centre of the barn and on either side of it were rows of pens twelve in number, the entire barn being thus divided into twenty-four partitions. The partition walls did not exceed four or five feet in height, so that from one pen one could easily look into another. These compartments had each a door which opened upon the passage in which the European visitors were standing.

"May we open one of these doors?" asked van Beneden, as he stretched out his hand to one of them.

"You may not, sir!" cried one of the Chinamen who, having noticed the gesture, understood the meaning of the question.

"Hold you tongue, will you!" said Verstork, in a loud tone of voice. "You be off, out of the place altogether."

And after the Chinaman had disappeared, he turned to his friends, and said: "I do not think you will care to go into those filthy holes. We can see well enough what is going on inside through the chinks in the partitions and doors, indeed, I believe, we shall thus see more than if we were to enter."

"Look," continued he, "there you have a smoker in the first stage of intoxication."

Yes! there, on the baleh baleh, lay a Javanese. There he lay on the only article of furniture which the den could boast of, stretched out full length, and half reclining on his side. He had thrown off his head-cloth, and his long black hair floated over the disgustingly filthy pillow on the bench. His eyes, which betrayed his ecstatic condition, were half closed, and every now and then, he brought with his right hand the bowl of his opium pipe to the tiny flame which was flickering on a bit of wick dipping in a little saucer of oil. As he did so his head, partly supported on his left hand, would be slightly bent forward, as he took the thick bamboo stem of the pipe between his lips. Then, very slowly, he inhaled the smoke of the kindling opium. After a few puffs, he put down the pipe and turned over on his back, his head thrown back upon the pillow. The smoker now closed his eyes entirely, and strained with might and main to swallow the smoke he had inhaled. As soon as he had succeeded in doing this, he lay quite still while a look of satisfaction and enjoyment passed over his countenance. That look of satisfaction, however, offered the strangest contrast with the whole exterior appearance of the man, even with the features on which it appeared. Before lying down on the baleh baleh, he had flung aside his vest, and now lay covered only by his shirt which was the filthiest and most loathsome rag imaginable.

The man was as lean as a skeleton, and would have been admirably fitted to take his place at the Danse Macabre. The faint light of the little palita showed every rib in his body, and the dark shadows which they cast, showed how deep were the cavities between that trellis work of bone. His arms were like sticks encased in brown leather-like skin. His legs were not visible, being covered by the sarong; but the appearance of the feet, which protruded from under the garment, proved that like the arms the legs also were nothing but skin and bone. When the man had, for awhile, held the smoke which he had swallowed, he blew it out again very slowly through his nostrils, a proceeding which it took some time to accomplish—then he turned over on his side and appeared to fall into a deep sleep. At that sight a female form, which had been crouching in one corner of the compartment, and had thus remained unnoticed, rose up and made for the door. The poor creature had been present there all the time— In her haste to leave the wretched little apartment, she nearly ran up against the European gentlemen.

"Oh, heavens! the devil!" she cried; but, in the darkness, she could not recognise anyone, and so she hurried into a neighbouring recess.

In that recess, the spectacle was more horrifying still. There, stretched out on the baleh baleh, lay an old Javanese. He was as angular, as emaciated, and as much wasted away, as the other man; but he was in another stage of intoxication. He had smoked more than one madat ball, hence he was in a different state of ecstasy. His hollow, sunken eyes glittered with unwonted fire; his breast heaved, and his face wore a bestial grin, the lower jaw protruding far beyond the upper stamping the features with the mark of the brutal passions which were raging within. The upper part of his body also was bare, but the violence of the passions which possessed him caused his entire frame to heave and quiver, and had made him cast aside even his sarong, so that now he lay there in the state in which the patriarch Noah was discovered by his sons.

No sooner had the creaking door given admittance to the woman than he called out sharply to her:

"Where have you been all this time? Come, make haste, get me another pipe."

The wretched creature obeyed without a murmur. She advanced to the baleh baleh, took some tandjoe out of a small box, warmed it at the flame of the palita, and then mixed it with a little very finely cut tobacco. Then she rolled it in her fingers into a little ball about the size of a large pea, put this into the bowl of the opium pipe, and handed it to the wretched smoker.

During these operations, and when she leaned forward to hand him the pipe, the miserable smoker, no longer master of his passions, and wholly unable to restrain himself, had acted in a manner so outrageously indecent, that Grashuis cried out:

"Oh, this is too revolting! Come, let us be off, I cannot stand it any longer."

Just at that moment a cry was heard a little further down the half-dark passage.

"Good God, this is most infamous! Is it possible—Let us get out—Let us get out, friends—fire from Heaven will fall upon us and consume us!"

It was van Beneden who had walked a few steps further down the passage, and had been peering into one of the recesses down there. Now he wildly rushed out of the place, dragging his friends almost by main force along with him.

"What in the world is the matter with you?" asked Grenits.

"Oh, I can't tell you what I have seen," cried August van Beneden, hardly able to speak plainly in his excitement. "Come along."

"Now no false modesty," said Grashuis; "we have come here on purpose to gain what information we can about the horrors of opium, and so each one of us must tell his experience. What was it you saw, Theodoor?"

"Don't ask me," cried Theodoor Grenits. "It is really too abominable; such things must not be uttered— And the victim—was a little Javanese girl—she struggled frightfully."

"Aye," said van Rheijn, "I thought I heard screaming."

"And can we do nothing? Come, Verstork, you as Controller—"

But Verstork restrained his companions who were preparing once again to rush into the den.

"I shall take good care," said he, "not to meddle in any opium matters. They, at Batavia, would very soon find me wholly unfit to hold any government appointment and, however revolting a deed may be, I should find no support in van Gulpendam my superior officer at Santjoemeh. My whole career would be ruined—No, my friends, I must let things take their course."

"But," cried Grenits, "I am not bound by any such considerations—I will—"

"You will keep quiet I hope," said Verstork to his friend who was trying to make his way once again into the opium den. "Remember that I am in your company, and that even if you went in there quite alone you would still compromise me by your rash and foolish action. I beg you therefore—Here! you see the child is coming out"

As Verstork spoke a little Javanese girl hardly ten years of age came rushing out of the loathsome den, she sobbed and moaned as she ran past the European gentlemen.

"Oh this is fearful—this is fearful," cried Grenits, "and then to have to stand still while such horrors are going on! I should like to—But—" continued he as he turned to van Beneden, "will you still maintain that opium is in its effects to be compared to drink."

August van Beneden did not reply; but the deepest indignation was visible in his countenance.

"Come," said Verstork, as he tried to calm his friend, "let us not remain standing here, men, women and children are beginning to crowd round."

"Those people," cried Grenits, "were just now looking on at those filthy scenes through the chinks of the bamboo walls."

"And," said van Beneden, "the opium farmers did not try to prevent them, but seemed on the contrary to encourage them. I could see it all plainly enough."

"Come," said Verstork again, "let us be off. Let us go and sit down again under the Wariengien tree. Oppas," continued he to one of the policemen who always kept near him, "you go and tell these dessa people that they are to go home—it is time for all to go to sleep."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE OPIUM-MONOPOLY. A QUIET CHAT.

THE people of Kaligaweh were quiet folk, and did as they were told. Very soon the dessa had resumed its ordinary peaceful appearance, and the little group of European gentlemen were once again seated under the widely-spreading crown of the gigantic wild-fig tree. But if, a short time ago, they had paid but very little attention to the wondrous beauties of the tropical night, their visit to the opium-den made them still more indifferent to its attractions. As soon as they were again seated, the conversation, naturally enough, turned upon the terrible scenes which they had witnessed.

"In that passage," said Grashuis, who, as surveyor, was accustomed to take in local details at a glance, "there were twenty-four doors and therefore there must be twenty-four such hideous pens. If all of them— What a pity it is that we allowed ourselves to be scared and that we did not carry out our investigation to the end."

"No, no, my friend," said Verstork, "I am glad we did not. Almost all the recesses were occupied, and the scenes which they would have revealed would have differed only from those you saw in the degree of beastliness. I repeat it—it is much better that we did not go on. But, when I tell you that in the dessa Kaligaweh there are some eighty households which number about six hundred souls, one hundred and thirty of which are able-bodied working men, and that such a den as we visited remains open for three-quarters of the four-and-twenty hours—And when I further tell you that if you had looked into the wretched huts all around you would have found many an opium-smoker in them also—then, I think you will be able to form some idea of the extent which the abuse of opium has attained."

"Do you happen to know," asked Grashuis, who was fond of statistics, "what percentage of the inhabitants is given to this abuse of opium?"

"Well," returned the other, "I do not think we shall do much good by troubling ourselves about figures which are generally misleading and only serve to prove how clever statisticians are in the *art de grouper les chiffres*."

"Yes," said Grenits, "and we know full well that treasury officials have very little scruples on such points."

"It is a blessing that Muisenkop does not hear you say that," said van Rheijn, with a laugh, "you would see him fire up at such a suggestion."

"With regard to Kaligaweh," continued Verstork, "I venture most confidently to assert that there are not ten men in the dessa who are free from the vice of opium smoking."

"Humph," muttered van Beneden, who, though a lawyer, was also fond of figures, "that is about 93 per cent."

"I found that out," continued the controller; "when, about a twelvemonth ago I was on the look-out for a man to put into the place of my former loerah; a good fellow enough, but one whom the opium-pipe had rendered totally unfit for any position of trust."

"Did you succeed?" asked Grenits.

"Yes, I did; but not without much difficulty. It was my intention to appoint Setrosmito, the poor devil who just now has got himself into trouble, and it was only because the man could neither read nor write that I had to give up the idea. The inquiries, however, which I then was forced to make, revealed to me the startling fact that women, and even children of eight or nine years of age use opium. They actually scrape out the father's pipe in order to get hold of the fatal narcotic."

"But," remarked van Beneden, "Kaligaweh probably forms an exception."

"Not by any means," rejoined Verstork, testily; "during my official career I have been stationed in several residencies, and I venture to affirm that, as far as opium is concerned, their condition is much the same as that in Santjoemeh. You will find hundreds of dessas in the island like Kaligaweh."

"I suppose," put in Grenits, "we must except the Preanger districts?"

"Oh yes, certainly," assented Verstork, "the use of opium is altogether forbidden there."

"And does that work well?"

"Excellently," said Verstork.

"That is, I have no doubt," asked Grashuis, "a tentative measure on the part of the Government which, if it succeeds, will be extended to the whole of Java?"

"Not at all," replied Verstork. "In the first place the prohibition has been in force too long to be merely tentative for it dates back as far as 1824; and then, in the next, it was not at all adopted with the view of checking the abuse of opium; but merely because it was feared that the people would take to coffee-stealing in order to be able to satisfy their craving."

"Come," said van Rheijn, "that is not at all a bad idea."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Grashuis, "to conceive a more cynical confession of the fact that opium demoralises the people?"

"And if," continued Grenits, "you add that confession to the scenes which we have just witnessed, then put the question seriously to yourselves: is there any truth in the assertion made by van Rheijn and backed up by van Beneden, that the abuse of opium can in any way be compared to the abuse of alcohol, or put on the same level with it? No, no, in my opinion, it is infinitely more deplorable!"

"Such is my opinion also," assented Verstork; "every attempt made to put down or to limit the extent of opium-smoking and to check its abuse, must be looked upon as an act of much greater philanthropy than the efforts made by the friends of temperance or the preachers of total abstinence. But—"

"Yes—but what?" cried another.

"But," continued he, "every such attempt is a direct blow aimed at the revenue at home."

"Aye, aye, there you have it," said Grenits; "and whenever you raise such a question as that, our good friends at the Hague are uncommonly hard of hearing."

"Well, I don't blame them," interrupted van Rheijn, "they cannot afford to sacrifice the millions which the opium trade pours into the treasury."

"God help us!" cried Grenits, "did ever man hear such an argument as that? What would you say to a thief who would try to excuse his theft by saying that he was in need of the stolen money to go and fuddle himself in a beershop; or to a murderer who would try and justify his crime by stating that he poisoned his uncle only because he wanted the inheritance to—to—well, say to keep his mistress?"

"Oh, oh, oh!" cried several voices, "what a comparison!"

"Yes," said Verstork, "the comparison is certainly not flattering; but it has the advantage of being a perfectly just one. So long as our country indulges in the costly luxury of an administration such as ours; and so long as it maintains the opium trade in its present state to furnish funds for that costly administration: such proceeding may very justly be compared to the action of a thief who steals a banknote in order to go and spend it in a gin-palace."

"Or rather," cried Grenits, "to that of a man who poisons his uncle so that he may have the handling of his money. I consider the latter comparison to be a still more just one; because it cannot be denied that though Holland has always treated her Indian possessions as a milch-cow, the present system of scraping and squeezing is beginning to exceed all reasonable bounds and limits."

"Oh! oh!" again cried van Rheijn and van Beneden as in protest.

"Well gentlemen," asked Grenits, "am I exaggerating? Tell me now, are they not, at home, exceeding all limits and bounds in the heavy taxation which they heap on the shoulders of the industrial and commercial classes?"

"Aye, but," remarked van Beneden, "you must remember that in Holand people have to pay taxes as well as out here."

"If you will take the trouble to look into the matter," said Grenits, "you will find that they do not pay anything like what the people have to pay here. Then again, I ask, do they not exceed all bounds and limits in increasing the burdens, already too heavy, which the poor native population has to bear?"

"I quite agree with you there," said Verstork.

"Do they not," continued Grenits, "exceed all limits in the pitiful and niggardly way in which they treat their soldiers out here?"

"How so?" asked van Rheijn.

"Why, to give you but one instance, by loudly declaring that there is peace at Atjeh—a peace which has no real existence whatever—and thereby robbing the poor soldiers and doing them clean out of their already too meagre pay?"

"Oh, what need we bother ourselves about those soldier fellows!" cried van Rheijn.

"Do they not again," continued Grenits, "overpass all reasonable limits, by encouraging and fostering the abuse of opium?"

"Now, that is too bad," cried van Beneden, "now you are going too far; that accusation of yours is not a fair one."

"You think so, do you?" said Grenits. "Well then just take Band's book in hand. There you will find proof absolute of the fact that it is, and has always been, the policy at the Hague to encourage and to foster the opium-trade as much as possible. Figures are stubborn things—just listen to what they have to say. In 1832, the opium revenue amounted to three millions, in 1842 it rose to very nearly seven millions. In 1870 it was quite ten millions, in 1880 it amounted to thirteen millions. In 1885 that same revenue rose to nineteen millions; and now, in 1886, it is estimated at quite twenty one millions, and our House of Representatives has accepted that estimate without the slightest demur, and without one word of protest. Of course, every now and then, there is a great moan made in political and in other circles at home, and a great deal is said about the iniquities of the opium trade; but, for all that, the authorities have their hands perfectly free and are encouraged by all parties to squeeze out of that trade as much as it can be made to yield."

"But, excuse me," asked van Rheijn, "is it not one of the first duties of every government to make an impost as productive as possible?"

"Certainly it is,—and it is precisely therein that lies the immorality and the demoralizing tendency of the opium-monopoly. You see, in order to enable the farmers to increase their bids, the abuse of the drug must be encouraged. Thus the poor natives are driven, we may say, into the opium-den by any and by every means—the most illegal and the dirtiest means seem to have the preference. Just read our local papers, and then you will be edified, I think, at the infamous annoyance which the Chinese opium-factors are empowered to inflict upon the non-consumers, and at the unlimited control they are allowed to exercise, always in the most shameless and arbitrary fashion, over any poor wretch who, seeing, it may be, the error of his ways, tries to diminish his daily consumption."

"Or provide himself with smuggled opium," remarked van Rheijn, interrupting him.

Grenits, however, paid no heed to the remark, and went on: "The opium-monopoly was originally established with the very laudable object of raising the price of the article and of thus leaving it within the reach of as few people as possible. On that principle, therefore, every regulation must be condemned which tends to augment the revenue by increasing the sale. But, at present, our Colonial Secretary relies upon the system as a regular means of increasing the revenue. When we have such facts as these before us, facts which can be proved to demonstration, then we feel ourselves driven to pronounce this judgment: 'Our government and our representatives are fully convinced of the terrible and fatal effects of the abuse of opium by their Indian subjects; but they will not consent to forego the profit which they obtain by the wholesale poisoning of an entire population.'"

"Come, come, poisoning! That is a rather strong word!" cried van Beneden.

"Yes," continued Grenits, very quietly, "I said poisoning—that was my word. If in Holland an apothecary does not keep his opium in the proper poison chest, or if he is detected in selling it without the proper order from a medical man, he is fined—very heavily fined. Am I not right, van Nerekool?"

Thus addressed van Nerekool raised his head, looked up vacantly for a moment or two and gave an affirmative nod; it seemed very doubtful whether he had understood the question at all. Grenits, however, accepted that nod as a gesture of assent, and continued:

"Yet that same poison may here be procured without the slightest difficulty, nay more than that, is actually forced upon the poor people in the most shameless manner by the Chinese scoundrels who keep the opium dens. And that goes on under the eyes, and with the full cognizance, sanction, and under the protection of the Dutch Government."

"You are growing tiresome," sneered van Rheijn, "you keep on harping on that one string—the Dutch Government—The fact is, my dear fellow, you are tarred with the self-same brush of discontent as all the manufacturers and merchants out here in India."

"Why should I not be?" cried Grenits passionately. "I do not always agree with all their opinions; but yet I do form a part of that important commercial body; and when a question arises which effects the vital interests of industry and commerce—Well, yes, then you may say that I am tarred with the same brush."

"But have these grumblers really so very much to complain of?" asked Grashuis in a bantering tone of voice.

"I should think they have," replied Grenits. "Under our present system we are not only flayed; but we are sucked dry, in a manner which, elsewhere, would drive men to open rebellion. When the Dutch revolted against Spain, and when the Belgians rose up in arms against the Dutch, neither of them had anything like so much to complain of as we have here,—neither of them suffered anything like the extortion which the Indo-Europeans have to put up with at the hands of their present oppressors."

"Oh, oh, oh!" cried several voices.

"We have now to pay duties and taxes compared to which the tithes at which our ancestors rebelled were the merest child's play. And then, in return, what rights do we enjoy?—If one could, on so serious a subject, be capable of indulging in a sorry joke—I might say that we have the privilege only of having absolutely no rights at all. For, that which here in India goes by the name of law and justice, is in reality nothing more than the merest burlesque; and that is especially true in all matters which concern the revenue. Wherever there is a little money to be made, the State flings itself upon its victims as some ravenous beast leaps upon its prey, and then one may look in vain for the smallest protection—least of all in any case which concerns that *imperium in imperio* the terrible opium monopoly!"

"You are exaggerating, you are talking wildly!" cried van Rheijn.

"I wish I were," continued Grenits; "but just take up that terrible book '*Might versus Right*,' a book written by a member of the High Court of Justice at Batavia, who was formerly, for many years, Attorney General in that same court, and for half an ordinary lifetime was president of the Residential Council. A man, therefore, who ought to know, and who does know what he is talking about, and then—when you have read what he has to say—tell me if I am exaggerating."

"Oh, the writer of that book is another grumbler!" said van Rheijn, "whose only object is to set the whole world against the functionaries of our Administration."

"That is a very heavy accusation to bring against a man who, in my opinion, is thoroughly honest, and who has had the courage, and therefore deserves the credit, of having told the plain unvarnished truth. Such, however, is our national gratitude!"

"Oh yes!" cried van Rheijn, "I am not at all surprised to find you commercial men in ecstasies about that man and about his book. To all grumblers it is of course meat and drink."

"Let me tell you, my good fellow," said Grenits, "that those whom you call grumblers have had good cause given them for discontent."

"Come, come," said the other, "you talk very finely; but after all they are only a pitiful handful of very tame insurgents. Depend upon it we shall manage very easily to keep order among them."

"Yes, yes, I know," said Grenits, bitterly, "that is the old stock phrase. It was used some little time ago by certain organs of the Dutch press when the people, exasperated by vexatious extortions, strove—by perfectly legitimate means mind you—to resist acts of arbitrary injustice and exaction on the part of the Dutch Government.

"'Tame insurgents!" continued he, vehemently. "Tame insurgents! By heaven! let them not at home taunt us much longer with that name. A very little more, and they will be at their wits' end to deal with an insurrection which will prove itself anything but tame. Don't let them forget, yonder, that, to carry on a miserable war like that at Atjeh, they had to sweep up the scum of Europe; for you know that Dutch heroism in our towns at home made the poor wretches whom they manage to press for that service sing the pleasant refrain:

‘My life is pain and woe,„
To Atjeh I will go . . .’

"Grenits, Grenits!" cried Verstork, trying to calm his friend's growing excitement.

"Yes," said he, "my dear Verstork, I am wrong and I am going too far, I have very nearly done. But those heedless words, 'tame insurgents,' have worked a great deal more mischief than those who first uttered them could possibly foresee. They have proved to us that, in our lawful resistance to extortion, we have nothing to expect but only contempt and abuse. May God in his mercy protect Holland! But I have good reason to know that if a man were to arise amongst us possessed of the necessary talent for organisation, and one who, at the same time, had sufficient tact to gather around him all that discontent which at present is powerless because it is divided amongst itself—If such a man, I say, were to arise who could make the most of the utter state of perplexity they are in yonder—we, the 'tame insurgents,' would make our mother country pass through very evil days indeed!"

"Well," said van Rheijn, "all that is not so very formidable after all. In case matters came to the worst, the army would know how to do its duty."

"Its duty!" cried Grenits. "That sounds well from you who just now were the first to scoff at those 'soldier fellows'. But I ask you this one question:—Has the Government any right whatever to reckon upon the fulfilment of that duty? Has it not neglected, in the most shameful manner, its duty towards that army? I will allow—I am indeed fully persuaded—that in spite of any treatment the officers would stick to their duty, and would do it strictly and honourably. But—! can one expect as much from all the foreigners, which have been shipped out hither? Why, even now in Atjeh, they are deserting to the enemy with bag and baggage, with arms and ammunition—and, in the case I was supposing, they would go over in entire companies. Can one look for any sense of duty in these poor wretched native soldiers, who have almost to a man, by the most shameful means—by opium, by gambling, by the allurements of the vilest women—been pressed into the service. No, no, pray don't go on deceiving yourselves."

"There!" cried van Rheijn, "now you are simply talking treason—your language is seditious."

"Treason, do you call it?" cried Grenits, passionately. "When I do nothing more than lay my finger upon the wound?"

"Gentlemen," said Verstork interposing, "methinks it is high time to close this discussion. Such topics are very apt to make men hot, and—moreover, why, it is just past midnight. We must go and get some rest, for to-morrow we must be up by day-break and we have a very fatiguing day before us. The Djoerang Pringapoes which you visited with me this evening, is no ball-room let me tell you—you will find that out to-morrow. Come, let us all turn in and get some sleep!"

At these words all, except van Nerekool, rose and prepared to retire.

"I am very glad," said Grashuis, "that old Muizenkop was not present at this conversation. Had he been here, by to-morrow evening the Resident would have known all about it, chapter and verse, with no doubt the necessary additions and flourishes. And then, my good friend Grenits, you would have had a '*mauvais quart d'heure*.' Who knows, they might have packed you off to Atapoepoe or to Tomini Bay; perhaps they might have kicked you out of the island altogether. Remember poor lawyer Winckel!"

Grenits shrugged his shoulders disdainfully.

"Are you coming to bed?" asked Verstork as he walked up to van Nerekool who was still seated with his head resting on his hand outside the hut which the others had already entered.

Van Nerekool made no reply, he merely looked up and stared into the face of his friend with a strange dazed expression.

"What in the world is the matter with you, old fellow?" said Verstork as he laid his hand on his shoulder and sat down by the side of his friend. "You have been so silent and so absent all day, you must be ill I fear!"

"No, William, I am not ill, but I feel so very—so very wretched."

"Wretched!" said Verstork, "come now, tell us all about it, there's a good fellow, let me bear some part of your sorrow!"

"Ah!" sighed van Nerekool, "I can tell you nothing—nothing that you could share with me. William, my dear friend, you recollect our conversation of last Saturday night at Santjoemeh?"

"Every word of it," replied Verstork. "I then told you that in one week's time I would give you my reasons why I considered your love affair with Miss van Gulpendam a very sad business. That week is up to-day—is it not?"

"Yes, my friend," said van Nerekool very sadly. "But you can tell me nothing now. During the last week many things have happened. I suppose that even on Saturday last you knew that Resident van Gulpendam was not at all well disposed towards me?"

To that question Verstork gave no direct reply; but he insisted upon being told all that had taken place.

"Come," said he, "come, Charles, tell me all about it. You know perfectly well that you have in me a true friend. Let us hear all about it."

"But," replied van Nerekool, "you want rest. You ought to go to sleep. To-morrow you have a hard day before you."

"Oh!" said Verstork, lightly, "never mind about that. I have often enough gone the rounds of the government coffee-plantations, and have passed many a sleepless night in the dessas with quite as hard a day in prospect as to-morrow is likely to be. I can very easily afford an old friend like you an hour or so of sleep. Do pray speak out."

Charles van Nerekool hesitated no longer. He felt indeed in great need of sympathy; and wanted, above all things, to pour out his heart to his friend. He began his story therefore, by telling him how, on the occasion of the State-ball, he had declared his love to Anna.

In the most vivid colours he described to his friend that happy moment in which, carried away by the excitement of the dance and the glorious tones of Weber's waltz, he had allowed the long-treasured secret of his heart to escape from him; and his rapture when the girl, whom he so dearly loved, had uttered the one little word which assured him that she returned his affection. He told him of that sacred moment when their lips first met in the garden.

> "Oscula qui sumpsit, si non et caetera sumpsit
> Haec quoque quae data sunt, perdere dignus erat."

muttered Verstork to himself. He, in his youth, had studied the classics, and now he could not help smiling as he recalled the two well-known lines from Ovid's Ars Amandi. But when he saw with what a sorrowful shake of the head his friend answered the half audible quotation, he at once discovered how deep a wound had been struck into that poor heart. The story of that blissful love-scene and of those happy moments spent in the garden of the Residence in the shade of the Padan arbour, was followed by an equally graphic description of the rude awakening out of that dream of love and felicity. Charles van Nerekool went on telling his friend how Mrs. van Gulpendam had broken in upon the interview—he told him all about the conversation which he afterwards had held with fair Laurentia.

A very very bitter smile passed over the Controller's lips when he heard what means of seduction the Resident's wife had deigned to employ.

"My poor friend, my poor friend," he muttered almost inaudibly; "but is this all?"

"Oh, no!" cried van Nerekool.

"Well, go on, I am all ears."

"The next day," continued van Nerekool, "I paid a visit to the Residence, as I had promised Anna I would do; in order to lay before her father my formal request for her hand. I had great difficulty in obtaining an audience at all; and it was not until after I had waited for a considerable time that I got to be admitted into the presence of the Resident.

"'I have not very much time to spare, sir,' were his first words of welcome when he saw me enter the office in which he sat to receive me.

"'I have not very much time to spare, therefore I beg you will at once get under weigh.'

"'Mr. van Gulpendam,' I began, 'yesterday I had some talk with Miss Anna—and—'

"'Do pray set sail at once,' cried he, interrupting my opening speech, 'I tell you again I have no time for dawdling. I may at once tell you that I do not think it a very proper thing for a gentleman to get a young girl into a quiet corner. Fair and above board is my motto, sir. An honest man sails straight into port. All that tacking and trimming are not to my taste, I can tell you.'

"'My dear sir!' cried I, 'I have already told Mrs. van Gulpendam that the excitement and the surroundings had quite thrown me off my guard. It is now, and it always was, my intention to ask you fairly and openly for your daughter's hand. There can, between us, be no question of any intrigues or mysteries, and my presence here, Mr. van Gulpendam, has no other motive than to declare to you my love to Miss Anna, and to obtain your sanction to our union as man and wife.'

"'So, so,' said he, 'does the wind sit in that quarter? You have pricked your chart very prettily indeed. Now would you like to know what I have put down in my log, eh?'

"'Mr. van Gulpendam, I can assure you that I never was more serious in my life—the question is to me one of the utmost importance,' said I, amazed and disgusted at all this sea-jargon. ‘In heaven’s name let us lay aside all jesting. I simply have the honour of asking you for the hand of your daughter.’

“‘Mr. van Nerekool,’ he replied, ‘I also am in a most serious mood.’ This he said in a somewhat nettled tone, however, not another nautical expression passed his lips during the interview. ‘How can you suspect me of jesting, when I ask you whether you can surmise to what decision I am about to come with regard to your question?’

“‘I hope,’ cried I, ‘that your decision will not be unfavourable to me! Oh, sir, I love Miss Anna with all my heart and with all my soul!’

“‘Of course, of course,’ said he, ‘these are the regular stock phrases of all lovers. Now, are you really and seriously in love with her?’

“‘How can you ask such a question?’ cried I, vehemently.

“‘Well,’ replied van Gulpendam, ‘I have my reasons,—and they are very good reasons too—for doing so. You had an interview yesterday evening with my wife, had you not?’

“‘Yes, Resident,’ was my reply.

“‘And the conversation you then held with her opened up to you the prospect of a future career. I think I am right there?’ was his second question.

“I simply sat staring at the man in utter amazement. Never, never, could it have come into my head that he and his wife were of the same way of thinking in such a matter as that.”

“Why not, pray?” asked Verstork, very quietly.

“Why, my dear friend, I looked upon the Resident as worldly and frivolous indeed; but I thought he was an honourable man, and one who kept himself altogether clear of the intrigues in which his wife appears to dabble.”

Again the bitter smile curved Verstork’s lips; but in the deep shadow of the the Wariengien tree, van Nerekool failed to perceive it.

“Go on,” said Verstork, who, though deeply moved, spoke in so perfectly quiet and composed a tone of voice, that his friend did not notice his feelings.

“To his last question,” resumed van Nerekool, “I replied, ‘Yes, Resident, you are right. Mrs. van Gulpendam did make me certain proposals.’

“‘She spoke to you then of your future prospects, as well as on the subject of your present request?’ asked the Resident.

“‘Yes, Resident,’ was my reply,—indeed I was growing very nervous.

“‘Well, then,’ resumed he, ‘you see that you have the making of your career entirely in your own hands; and I do hope that you will now at length prove yourself a man of some practical common sense.’

“My dear William! at these words, which, you will notice, cast a grave suspicion upon the motive of my request, upon which, however, my entire happiness depended, I felt, as it were, the ground sinking away from under me.

“‘But, Resident,’ I cried, in despair, ‘do you really know what Mrs. van Gulpendam did propose to me?’

“‘Well, yes,’ he said, in a very off-hand and somewhat mocking manner, ‘pretty well, pretty well, I think. She held out to you the prospect of being appointed successor to the present Chairman of the Council at Santjoemeh, which important position, I think she told you, might very probably be permanently conferred upon you. Further she did not refuse you her daughter’s hand—whom you declare that you love so very dearly. You see I am pretty well informed. Now, if you have called upon me this morning to ascertain what guarantees I can give you that these proposals will be realised—and allow me to tell you that is the course a sensible man would certainly take—then, I think I may say, you need not be uneasy.’

“This utterly false interpretation of my motives, stung me to the quick. What ignoble thoughts and sentiments must have been stirring in that bosom!

“‘Mr. van Gulpendam!’ I cried out, interrupting him, very warmly, ‘I was not in the least thinking of those proposals. Still less, if possible, did I call here this morning in order to ascertain your intentions—nothing of all this was present to my mind when I asked you whether you were aware of the offers Mrs. van Gulpendam made me last night.’

“‘Indeed,’ said he very coolly, ‘then I fear I have misunderstood you altogether, Mr. van Nerekool. In that case with what intention did you put that question to me?’

“‘What was my intention?’ I replied. ‘Why, my intention was simply this. Are you aware that Mrs. van Gulpendam asked me to violate my oath and my duty?’

“‘Oh, come, come,’ said he all but laughing at me.

“‘Are you aware,’ I continued still more hotly, ‘that I was actually required to send a poor innocent man into banishment?’

"'My dear sir, you must be dreaming,' said he in the same tone of banter.

"'Are you aware,' I still continued, 'that the prospect of obtaining your daughter's hand, that honours and promotion were offered me at the price of a human life?'

"'Now Mr. van Nerekool,' cried van Gulpendam with much assumed indignation, 'now you are going too far! I forbid you to utter such insinuations and to make such charges against my wife. What! you come here to me to ask me for my daughter's hand, and you think you will obtain your request, I suppose, by heaping insults and slanders upon the mother of the woman you pretend to love!'

"'Insults and slanders!' I exclaimed.

"At these words of mine he cooled down immediately.

"'Well,' said he, 'perhaps the expression is too strong. There must be some misunderstanding.' And then, very quietly, he went on: 'Your proposal, Mr. van Nerekool, is a great honour both to my daughter and to myself. It has, however, come upon me so very unexpectedly that I feel sure you will allow me some time for reflection. I must indeed take some little time to consider a matter upon which the entire happiness of my daughter will depend. Moreover, you see there can be no hurry. Anna is very young—she is indeed much too young to think of marriage just yet.'

"'You do not therefore deprive me of hope?' I exclaimed and, in my excitement, I seized his hand and held it.

"He looked at me in astonishment. 'I can promise you nothing, absolutely nothing, Mr. van Nerekool. Anna has plenty of time before her, she can take a year—two years, perhaps—before she decides upon a step which involves a union for life. By that time we can talk over these matters again. Meanwhile—' He broke off hesitating.

"'Meanwhile?' I asked almost breathlessly.

"'Meanwhile,' he continued very coldly, "you will do well not to continue your visits at the Residence. I know you do not wish to compromise a simple-hearted and honest young girl, I shall, therefore, not expect to see you here excepting, of course, at our official receptions.'

"That was plain speaking enough,—was it not William? It was tantamount to a refusal."

Verstork looked at his friend with very real and deep sympathy.

"I had a presentiment," he said, "of the trouble that was awaiting you. You remember in what manner I received your communication last week?"

"Yes, and to-day you promised you would let me know why—"

"Now tell me, Charles," said Verstork, "is there any need for me to say anything more? You must, by this time, I presume, have been able to form a pretty accurate estimate of the family circle into which you would have been received in case your offer had been accepted."

"But William, Anna—!"

"Oh, yes," cried Verstork, "I know Anna is the purest and most amiable creature in the world. I know, as well as you do, that Anna is absolutely innocent of all this intrigue and trickery. Indeed I have often wondered how so fair a flower could have opened and developed in the midst of such surroundings. But, let the girl be—why simply what she is—however adorable she may be, if you marry her you cannot help being fettered to her parents, who are most certainly the most self-seeking and most corrupt beings which can possibly be found in any respectable society. My dear friend, just reflect how utterly and hopelessly wretched you would be tied to such a pair of schemers. That, my dear fellow, was the very thing I wanted to point out to you."

Van Nerekool heaved a deep sigh and, lost in thought, did not answer a word. He sat as one in a dream, with his head resting on his hand, peering upwards into the vast crown of the Wariengien tree through which the moon, now high up in the heavens, was casting her soft white beams.

For awhile Verstork respected his friend's silence. At length he said: "Come now, Charles, you have, I hope, somewhat relieved your breast. I have with a single word been able to draw your attention to that which it imported you much to know. Now try and forget all this for a while in sleep. You have this day had a long—and to you who are unaccustomed to such exercise—a necessarily fatiguing ride. Rest will, therefore, be most beneficial to you. To-morrow still greater fatigues are in store for you. These also I hope will be a distraction, and prove wholesome to your mind. If we would be fit for work to-morrow we must get some sleep. Come along."

Van Nerekool sighed again. Without a word he rose, he pressed the hand of his friend and then followed him into the hut. The others were already fast asleep, and he stretched himself out by their side upon the wooden bench.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE DJOERANG PRINGAPOES.

TOEAAN!—Toeaaan!—Toeaaaan!—

Such were the most unwelcome sounds which, a few hours later, were heard in the hut in which all our friends lay heavily sleeping.

Gentle sleep had, at length, taken compassion on poor van Nerekool also. For a long time after his conversation with Verstork, he had not been able to close an eye; and had been tumbling and tossing about and making the crazy couch creak and groan to such an extent that Leendert Grashuis and August van Beneden, who were close beside him, had uttered many an angry exclamation:

"For heaven's sake keep quiet! don't keep rolling about like that—it is enough to make a fellow sea-sick—" and then again:

"The majesty of the law seems uncommonly restless to-night; perhaps the mosquitoes trouble it, or an unquiet conscience, or a fit of the blues."

But at length, thank God, Charles had fallen into a deep sleep; he was not destined, however, very long to enjoy that blissful rest.

"Toeaan! Toeaaan!" Thus once again the voice began to cry. It was the voice of Verstork's servant who had got the watchman of the guard-house to wake him, and was now very cautiously trying to rouse his master out of his sleep.

But the Javanese servant felt that he was engaged in a very ticklish duty; and he set about it with all the circumspection which he was aware such unpleasant duties required.

He knew, by sad experience, that European gentlemen are apt to lose their temper when suddenly, at a very early hour, they are aroused out of a delightful sleep; therefore, on all such occasions the wily Javanese serving-man preferred to keep at a respectful distance from his Kandjeng toean, who, he knew, might at such a time be easily moved to raise his hand and deal him a sound box on the ears for his trouble. Not that Verstork was at all given to such rough usage of his servants; on the contrary, he was known and beloved among the natives for his kindly consideration, and for the coolness of his temper. But this was a wholly exceptional occasion, and one could never tell what the sudden irritation of being roughly shaken out of a pleasant slumber might produce. It was very easy to get a good slap in the face, and therefore the astute Javanese prudently kept himself at a safe distance.

"Toeaan! Toeaaan!" he ventured to say again in a very intense drawling whisper. But Verstork did not hear him.

"Toeaan! Kandjeng toeaan!"

Still not a word!

Then the servant very cautiously crept up to the couch. When he was close to his master he again cried out, in a still more subdued and still more drawling voice, "Toeaaan! toeaaaan!"

Still Verstork stirred not a limb, only van Nerekool seemed to have caught the sound, and was beginning to move about restlessly.

Then the man, very gently—so gently that it could not disturb the sleeper—began to fold back that part of the rug which covered his master's feet. The faint glimmer of the lamp which hung dangling from one of the rafters, just allowed him to see what he was about. When he had laid bare one of Verstork's feet, he began very, very gently to tickle his master's great-toe, while in the same cautious manner he again whispered "Toeaaan! toeaaaan!" and seemed, by the very humility of his voice, to beg pardon for the liberty he was taking in rousing his high and mighty master.

This tickling of the toe had, at once, the desired effect. Starting up Verstork sat up and cried:

"Who is there?" As he said these words he put his hand to his foot, evidently fearing that a snake had touched him. Indeed, the chilly and leathery skin of a native may very easily convey such an impression, especially on a man who is but half awake.

"Who is there?" he cried again. But by this time the Javanese servant had, with a bound, jumped away out of the furthest possible reach of his master's hand, and from the furthest corner of the hut he said: "It is I, Kandjeng toean!"

"What do you want?" roared the Controller, now thoroughly aroused, and not in the sweetest temper.

"It is now four o'clock, and the dessa people are all waiting."

"Is that all?" growled Verstork, who thought that his rest had been very unnecessarily disturbed. Who knows what absurdity he might in his drowsiness have added, had not the "toeaan, toeaan" of his servant, and the subsequent noise awakened van Beneden also, who was sleeping quite close to him.

He jumped up at once, and the moment he was awake began, as the Resident might perhaps have said, to turn up all hands.

"Come boys !" he shouted cheerily "Come boys, get up all of you !" as he threw himself from his bed with such energy as made the slight bamboo structure sway and creak as if it had been rocked by an earthquake.

"What's the matter, what's up ?" cried several voices starting out of sleep.

"What's up ?" cried van Beneden. "There's nothing up ! You get up, all of you, as fast as you can. It is four o'clock, and the dessa folk are all ready for the chase."

That word acted like magic. In a twinkling all were on their legs. They dressed, washed, combed, brushed themselves as well as one can perform all these processes in the interior of a dessa, which offers no great facilities for an elaborate toilet to Europeans who have passed the night in a small country hut.

For washing, indeed, there was no convenience at all—the only basin in the place was a mere potsherd. But, all were anxious to be off, and like soldiers who, in the field, have not always Sèvres or even Delt at command, they did the best they could, and soon completed their hasty toilet. Diogenes, the Greek philosopher of Sinope, had frequently, no doubt, dressed himself in much the same fashion. In a few moments all were ready, even van Nerekool who was bent upon seeking some relief for mental pain in physical exertion.

When they stepped out of the cabin they saw the entire male population seated cross-legged on the village green, trying to protect themselves from the cold morning air by drawing their sarongs as far as possible over their shoulders. Every man had brought his lance, and had stuck it upright before him into the ground. Every one of them held a huge rattle, an instrument very like that with which our old watchmen used to murder sleep while they pretended to keep guard over the sleepers.

The moon was, by this time, casting her beams under the branches of the Wariengien tree, and, as the pale light shone upon that strange group of human beings seated there in a crouching posture, it illustrated most vividly the theory of Darwin, so very much did that assembly look like a great conclave of apes.

"Are all your men here, Loerah ?" asked Verstork.

"Yes, Kandjeng toean."

"Very good. Then send one part of them round by the maize fields of the dessa, let the second division spread itself to the westward over the neck of the Dojerang Pringapoes, and let the rest go right into the ravine."

"Yes, Kandjeng toean— But— !"

"Well, but what ?" asked Verstork, noticing the Loerah's hesitation.

"May not the animals," said the chief, "thus make their escape through the eastern side of the ravine ?"

"How so, Loerah ?" said Verstork. "You have heard, I suppose, that the people from Banjoe Pahit will occupy the whole of the eastern side, and part even of the western side of the ravine ? Very good, now we understand each other I hope. We shall get on horseback at once, and will post ourselves in the upper part of the pass, and, if our instructions have been properly carried out, the whole of the game must come that way. Now, just listen carefully to what I have to tell you, Loerah."

"Yes, Kandjeng toean."

"As soon as we have got to the upper part of the ravine we shall fire a shot."

"Shall we hear it, sir, right down at the bottom ?"

"You are right, Loerah, quite right, it is a good distance—perhaps too far— Well then, I will tell you what you must do. As soon as day begins to break—but, mind you, before the sun has fairly risen—you will set your beaters to work. But, whatever you do, take care that the beasts have the road to the ravine left open to them."

"Yes, Kandjeng toean," was the invariable answer of the Loerah, always spoken in the most respectful tone.

Then in the deepest silence the beaters betook themselves to their posts while the European horsemen took the road to Banjoe Pahit.

As yet it was quite dark, so that the horses had to proceed at a very slow walk. This very moderate pace was absolutely necessary, because the road which they had to follow was a narrow path leading through the flooded rice fields, and the slightest deviation might have led to a highly unpleasant mud-bath. Presently, however, a faint streak of light was beginning to show itself on the eastern horizon. At first it was all but imperceptible, it seemed like a faint reflection of the waning moonlight; but gradually it became broader and deeper, then is began to spread a fiery glow over the eastern sky, and made the stars, which were still brightly twinkling in the zenith, to pale and fade away. The narrow path kept winding upwards; for Banjoe Pahit, towards which the riders were making their way, lay on much higher ground than Kaligaweh which was situated on the low foreshore. As the dawning light grew clearer and brighter, the horsemen were able to mend their pace, and soon the horses were going along at a good sharp trot, impelled, in a measure, by the instinct which told them that they were heading in the direction of their stables.

The upper end of the ravine was reached in good time, and the horsemen dismounted and gave their beasts in charge of a couple of Javanese servants who had come to meet them along with the body of beaters from Banjoe Pahit to which Mokesuep also had joined himself. These men at once took the horses home to the dessa.

It was not yet full daylight. The western sky was still a deep dark blue; but in the East the dawn was clothing itself in all the brilliant hues which herald the near approach of the perfect day. On all sides trees and bushes grew in the wildest disorder, and in their branches birds innumerable were piping and warbling, each, in his own way, sending up his hymn of praise to the great Creator. Leaves, twigs, boughs, flowers, and grass-blades, all were thickly covered with the tiniest possible specks of dew; and, as the light gradually brightened in the East, seemed bathed as it were in molten silver.

In spite of their impatience to begin their work upon the game, our young friends could not help pausing for a few moments in order to admire the magnificent spectacle before them, and to enjoy the delightful freshness of that glorious time which immediately precedes a sunrise; when suddenly, very far in the distance, was heard the confused noise of a most frightful tumult.

"There they go!" cried Verstork, "those are our beaters, what a row the fellows are making to be sure."

The natives were indeed hard at it, springing their rattles, banging on bamboos, yelling and screaming in a manner which drowned every other sound in nature, especially in that solemn morning hour when the orb of day is just about to rise.

At first the noise was heard as a mere confused hum very far away in the distance; but, as it gradually drew nearer and nearer, it became so exciting that even poor van Nerekool, forgetting his woes for a while, ran up and down clutching his rifle with trembling hand, and some of his companions, more excited even than he was, had their weapons at full cock, ready to open fire at a moment's notice.

"Now then, my friends," said Verstork, trying to calm down all this unnecessary flurry; "pray keep quiet. We have plenty of time before us. Please all keep cool, or we shall have some accident with those firearms."

"Are we in a good position here?" asked Grashuis.

"We are standing too close together it strikes me," remarked van Beneden.

"I intend to take you a little further into the ravine," said Verstork.

So they all advanced some fifty or hundred yards along a steep pathway which ran winding down through shaggy bushes and rocky boulders. Just by the side of that rugged path, the brook Banjoe Pahit began its downward course along its bed of rocks. It was a wonderfully beautiful little stream; its waters of the purest crystal went dancing from crag to crag, forming, in one place, a pleasant little basin or pool, at another tumbling down in foaming cataracts and splashing waterfalls, then, suddenly and mysteriously, disappearing altogether for a while amidst the wild shrubs and rugged boulders, and then a little further on, springing up again to renew its brawling and wanton play. The scene in the Djoerang Pringapoes was as wild and savage as possible, but marvellously picturesque withal. When the party had clambered down about a third part of the slope, the massive walls of rock which, up to that point, completely hemmed in the entrance to the ravine and which formed a kind of slit, suddenly ran back like the sides of a funnel, while they continued grandly and majestically to tower up into the sky.

The bottom of the ravine, however, as well as its walls, bore abundant evidence of great natural convulsions. Huge boulders were flung about in it at random in all directions, the stems of the trees which grew there were twisted and curled up into lumps and knots and were still bearing tufts of withered grass and nests of dry branches; the smoothly polished rocks also amply testified that when the north-east wind opened the sluice gates of heaven and the water-floods came down in torrents from the heights—the Banjoe Pahit could howl and roar along, and form dreadful currents and whirlpools; and that, at such times, it was well to keep out of the now quiet defile.

As the hunters were looking about them at the savage scene around, the din made by the beaters was gradually coming nearer and nearer. It was still a considerable way off and not a solitary head of game had shown itself.

"I wonder how that is?" said August van Beneden. "I fancied that we might have set to work shooting at once. May not our wild boars, if there are any at all in this ravine, have got away by some other road?"

"No, no," replied Verstork, "the Djoerang Pringapoes is hemmed in on almost all sides with perpendicular rocks, such as not even a wild pig can climb. There are two or three spots where the walls are not quite so steep, and which such animals might perhaps scale; but, if the Loeras of Banjoe Pahit and of Kaligaweh have carried out my instructions, these weak points have all been occupied by their men, so that none of the animals can have got away by them. The beaters, you see, with their abominable rattles are driving the pigs into the ravine, and I know they will all make for it, especially as it is their usual haunt."

"Aye, aye," said van Rheijn, "I see; but once in this ravine, depend upon it they will lie very close, there is plenty of room here for a game at hide and seek, and if they choose to get to cover, we may stand here waiting for them till doomsday."

"That might be so," remarked Verstork with a smile, "if the beaters would let them. But those fellows with their rattles will follow the pigs into the ravine and drive them in our direction. You will see how they will manage that presently. Just listen—what a row they are kicking up yonder—one would think they were a pack of fiends!"

Verstork indeed might well say so; for your Javanese, under ordinary circumstances cool and phlegmatic enough, can, on such occasions as a boar-hunt, display activity and energy in abundance. Then he seems almost beside himself; then he screams, he yells, he bellows, he whistles, he hisses, he crows, he shrieks. Then he frantically plies his rattle and, with any weapon he may happen to have in his hand, he bangs upon anything and everything he comes across, on trunks of trees, on stones—which, by the way, not unfrequently give out

most melodious sounds—on the sheath of his kris—undoubtedly he would bring down a whack on the skull of his neighbour also were he suffered to do so. And all this for the mere purpose of making a noise, the most horrible din imaginable in order to drive the game, which by nature is wild enough, into the direction which he wishes it to take.

"Now," said Verstork, "just a few paces further on and then we come to the entrance of the Djoerang Ketjel where a small stream, which we call the Karang Aleh, flows into the Banjoe Pahit. After the junction the two streams flow together through the narrowest gorge of the Pringapoes. Look there, you can see the split in the rocks just ahead. You see we are bounded on all sides by sheer cliffs and the game must pass through this defile to reach the upper part of the ravine and get away."

"By Jove," cried van Rheijn, "this does not strike me as a very pleasant spot, the place looks like a picture of universal ruin and desolation."

Indeed it was a terrible scene. The ragged sides of the ravines, consisting entirely of grey lava-rock, towered up perpendicularly into the sky. Here and there, on the bare walls, a mass of stone seemed, in its descent, to have stuck fast; and, in course of time, a little soil had gathered on its surface. In this shallow layer of earth, vegetation had immediately sprung up and formed there, as it were, a little green island in the midst of the grey ocean of desolation. Huge fragments of jagged stone lay scattered about in the wildest confusion, and amidst these, many weird and unsightly plants grew and flourished, such as the Sembong, the Kemanden Kerbo and the Oering aring with its venomous prickles. There also were seen the gnarled and twisted stems of the Djatie doerie and of the Siwallan. These stunted trees raised their poor meagre crowns out of the sea of stone, and, by arresting the progress of the débris which the water-flood whirled along, served to block up the pass still more effectually.

"Now then, my friends," said Verstork, "let us divide—we are standing here much too close together. Van Nerekool, the Wedono, and myself will take our stand here just opposite this narrow pass. You, Leendert, go with August to the top of that piece of rock which you see yonder to the right. You Theodoor and Frits take up your position on that broken ground on the slope. From those points you will have the gorge completely under your fire, and—if you really are as good shots as you are supposed to be—why then not a solitary pig ought to escape us. But make haste, get into your places—the beaters seem to be getting quite close."

It was indeed high time; for every instant the infernal din was coming nearer and growing more distinct. It was, in fact, becoming positively deafening. It sounded as if a veritable Pandemonium had broken loose. Grenits made a very wry face when he found that Mokesuep was to be his companion; but he had no chance of remonstrance at thus being saddled with a most uncongenial companion, for he had to get to his post without delay.

The positions which the guns were to occupy had been admirably chosen and showed a perfect knowledge both of the game and of the ground. The marksmen were all posted in full view of one another, so that there could be no risk of accident, at the same time their fire commanded the narrow opening of the ravine which lay open before them. Moreover they were all directed to take their stand upon spots slightly elevated above the level of the soil and were thus, to a great extent, out of the reach of the fearful tusks of the infuriated animals. Thus then they stood, most eagerly watching; but, though the entrance to the Djoerang lay perfectly open before them with here and there a few stunted shrubs much too low and small to conceal even the smallest pig, not a vestige of any animal could be seen. This suspense seemed intolerably long to the impatient and impulsive Europeans who were far from being endowed with the calm phlegmatic temperament of the natives. The Wedono stood there quiet and motionless as a statue.

"I can see nothing whatever," shouted August van Beneden to his friend, making use of his hands as a speaking-trumpet. "I fancy our good dessa-folk have taken it easy and have allowed the game to slip away quietly to the right or left."

"It is my opinion that the ravine is empty," remarked van Nerekool, to whom this long inaction was more irksome than even to the others.

Verstork interpreted van Beneden's words to the Wedono who, rifle in hand, was standing by his side, and asked him if he thought it possible.

"It may be,—but—perhaps it is not so," was the chief's cautious reply.

Still they waited, and waited—the din of the beaters was approaching with every moment and their yells became more distinct. A few minutes more would decide the question whether there was any game in the ravine or not, for a very short time would bring the beaters to the mouth of the opening.

Verstork was getting quite nervous with impatience, jokes were beginning to pass pretty freely among his friends, and although they were perfectly good-humoured jests and showed not the slightest ill-will towards him, yet they were not pleasant to listen to. Mokesuep was the only one who, in a singularly offensive tone, cried out:

"I say, Controller, I hope all that pork we are going to kill wont disagree with us!"—

"Hold your tongue, wretched Muisenkop," said Theodoor Grenits. "You always find some nasty thing to say!"

"That's all very fine," replied Mokesuep, "I can tell you I am getting beastly tired of standing here. A lot of fellows invited for a day's shooting, when there is nothing to shoot at!"

"The pigs were here all right enough," said Grenits, "you may depend upon that; I don't suppose you can blame Verstork if the beaters have allowed them to escape!"

Mokesuep was on the point of making some ill-natured rejoinder when Bang! Bang! Bang! went three rifle shots and interrupted his sneering remarks.

They were the rifles of Verstork, of van Nerekool and of the Wedono. These three were posted at the very mouth of the ravine, and had suddenly caught sight of a greyish indistinct mass of living things rushing towards the opening. Quick as thought, the three had thrown their rifles up to their shoulders and had opened fire upon the advancing herd of swine. The other hunters had, as yet, seen nothing. The rattling and yelling of the beaters seemed to redouble in intensity the moment they heard the first shots fired, and almost drowned the discordant grunts and groans of the pigs as they pressed into the narrow defile. From that moment however, all doubts as to the issue of the day's sport were at an end.

The three first rifle shots had bowled over the three foremost animals, one of which was a boar of gigantic size, and for a moment stopped the rush of the entire herd. The wounded animals lay on the ground, struggling and fighting, uttering fearful squeaks and striking out right and left with their formidable tusks at those who came behind, thus almost wholly blocking up the narrow opening. That lasted however only for a moment or two, for the noise of the beaters drove the creatures to such a pitch of fury that, in spite of all opposition, they rushed over the bodies of their fallen leaders. But the three men who had first opened fire, had, in those few moments, had time to reload, and an instant after, all the others posted to the right and left caught sight of the game and at once opened fire upon the dense struggling mass of pigs, hardly a single shot being lost. Thereupon a scene of the direst confusion ensued. The wounded animals tumbled over one another uttering groans and squeaks which baffle description. The hindmost ones, still urged on by the terrific noise of the beaters, fought and pushed their way to the front. The sows grimly defended their young and seemed to vent their fury upon the carcases of the dead and wounded, and, in that terrific melée, the bullets of the seven hunters kept plunging with the deadliest effect. The rifled breech-loaders poured shot after shot into the densely packed mass, and every moment the narrow gap became more and more impassible.

That went on for the space of about three minutes, during which the breech-loaders plied their unerring fire.

Presently van Nerekool said to Verstork: "Are we not running the risk of hitting some of the men in the rear?"

"Oh, no," replied Verstork, "if they have followed my instructions there is no danger whatever. A few yards lower down there is a sharp elbow in the ravine, so that if one of our bullets should happen to miss or to pass through the body of one of these beasts it must bury itself in the walls of rock. You hear—according to agreement, the fellows have already stopped their noise—they are not at all anxious to come to close quarters and to expose themselves to a stray bullet."

Meanwhile the fire had been kept up with hardly any cessation and with almost the same fatal effect. The grunting herd still was striving to push onward and to get clear of the deadly pass, and again and again the bullets knocked down the foremost, who in their death-struggle, dealt ripping blows all around.

But at length, after having for a while wallowed about hopelessly, a small remnant which still remained unwounded, suddenly headed round, led on by a huge black-coloured boar, and now no longer awed by the beaters, made a headlong charge back into the ravine from which they found it impossible to escape.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ENTRAPPED.

"HURRAH! they have turned tail, they are making off!" exclaimed Mokesuep.

That hero had all the while been trembling with fear; he had been in mortal terror lest the pigs should break through the line of fire; for if they had succeeded in doing so, a close struggle with the sword bayonet would probably have ensued. Therefore he had most anxiously been peering about to see if he could discover any way of retreat up the steep mountain sides. If, during that morning there had been shots fired which had flown wide of the mark, such misses had been due to his shaking hand. Indeed, some of his bullets had gone right over the wall of rock which hemmed in the ravine on all sides; but most fortunately had not injured any of the Javanese who were beating on the other side. The unpleasant whistling, however, of the projectiles from Mokesuep's rifle had scared the natives, and it was in a measure owing to those stray shots that the beaters had given up the battue rather sooner than they ought to have done.

Grenits was in a rage. "What are you hurrahing about," cried he to Mokesuep, "you were never born to be a Nimrod, that's plain enough!"

"Well," stammered the coward, whose lips were still white with fear; "it is all right, is it not?"

"All right!" cried Grenits, "no, it's all wrong. Don't you see that the remnant of the herd will get clear away? Come! forward! They are getting away, I tell you, we must get after them and not let a single head escape! Forward, boys, forward!"

The other young men, who were just as much vexed as was Grenits at the unsatisfactory result of their hunt, rushed into the pass together rifle in hand. Mokesuep only, very prudently remained behind, not even could the Wedono get him to follow by crying out to him, "Come! quick, sir." Our hero merely shook his head and stood looking after his companions until they disappeared out of his sight. Then throwing his rifle over his shoulder he took the road to Banjoe Pahit as he muttered to himself:

"No doubt, that's all very well; but I shall take precious good care not to come into contact with that filthy vermin. No, no, I shall go and have a chat with the wife of Verstork's cook—who knows what I may manage to do in that quarter! A nice little woman that! A devilish sly dog that Controller; what fun if I could get some shooting over his preserves!"

Thus mumbling to himself he walked along and had gained the upper entrance to the Djoerang Pringapoes. From that eminence he could command a fine extensive view over the broad rice-fields which rose in terraces on the hill-slopes, and whose surfaces, flooded with water at that time of the year, lay glistening in the bright sunshine like so many polished mirrors. It was as yet very early—scarcely half past seven o'clock. Mokesuep stood there looking all around him, not indeed in admiration of the beauties of nature; for a creature of his stamp could have no eye for that kind of thing; but gazing about anxiously and more than half frightened at the silence and solitude in which he now found himself after the riot and confusion down in the ravine. In the far distance he could still distinguish the shouts of the hunters and could now and then hear a shot fired by them at the retreating game; but the noise of the hunt grew fainter and fainter, and as it gradually died away in the depths of the Djoerang, not another sound was heard round about. This sudden stillness had something very disquieting about it. Mokesuep half wished that some human being would appear to share the solitude with him, and yet, on the other hand, he was wholly afraid of meeting with some of the natives. He had heard dreadful tales of the robbers by which some of the inland parts of Java were infested and rendered unsafe; and though he had a rifle slung from his shoulder which might have inspired any other man with confidence, he was of far too cowardly a nature to put any trust in his weapon. He stepped along slowly and cautiously, and presently, at the foot of a small range of hills lying to the northward and which formed a continuation of the chain of mountains in which the Djoerang Pringapoes was situated, he discovered a solitary hut, partly hidden away in the thick underwood which grew around it. Close by a couple of oxen were grazing by the side of a pathway. This little road ran past the hut to the north-west, and winded along the low dykes of the rice-fields. As Mokesuep traced the pathway in its course over the hill-slopes, he suddenly perceived a human figure evidently making for the hut. It was the form of a woman, of that there could be no doubt. Mokesuep breathed freely again; in the presence of a woman, especially if that woman happened to be a native, he felt brave enough; so he determined to wait for her, to try and enter into conversation and to walk pleasantly and sociably together to Banjoe Pahit. The approaching form, standing out boldly over the flooded rice-fields and reflected in their shining surface grew more and more distinct with every moment.

"By Jove," muttered Mokesuep, after having watched her for awhile, "by Jove, what a pretty girl! All the better for me—I shall have a charming walk with that dear little thing!"

He was, however, altogether out in his reckoning. When the girl got close to the hut, she took a side path which ran in a south easterly direction downwards amongst the rice-terraces, and which appeared to lead to Kaligaweh. Great was Mokesuep's disappointment at seeing this, and he was about to call out to her. Just then a Javanese came out of the hut and began beckoning to the girl.

"By heaven!" muttered Mokesuep, "that is Singomengolo, the opium spy. What in the world is he doing here?" And immediately he concealed himself behind some bushes which were growing by the wayside.

It was indeed Singomengolo, the wretch whom the evening before we saw leaving Kaligaweh and riding to the lonely hut. Again and again, he beckoned to the girl; but as she did not heed him, he cried out:

"Dalima!"

At this call the girl turned for an instant. Yes, it was pretty little Dalima, the baboe in the family of Mrs. van Gulpendam. She stopped for a moment, while her features showed undisguised terror as she recognised the notorious opium-hunter, whom she knew well by sight. She did not, however, stop for more than a single instant, and then sped on again as fast as she could.

"Dalima!" again cried Singomengolo, "Dalima, where are you hurrying to?"

"I am going to Kaligaweh," said the girl in a nervous tone of voice.

"Well, just come here for a moment," continued Singo.

"No, no," she replied, "I have not an instant to spare, I must get to my father as quickly as I possibly can," and again she sped on her way.

"Come here, I say," cried Singmengolo, "I have something to tell you about your father!"

"Oh, yes, I know," rejoined the young girl, "they told me father is very ill—that is why I am in such a hurry."

"You are wrong," cried Singo, "your father is not ill—it is something much worse than that."

The girl stopped at once: "Worse than that?" she asked, "tell me, is he dead?"

"No—much worse!"

"By Allah—what is it?"

"Come here," said Singo, "and I will tell you. There are things, you know, that one cannot shout out by the wayside."

This brought Dalima to his side. As she walked up to him, she had to pass the bushes behind which Mokesuep was lying concealed—in fact, in passing she brushed by them. As usual Dalima was very neatly dressed. Round her waist she wore a gaily coloured sarong, her bodice was of pink cotton, and over her shoulders was folded a red kerchief, from one of the points of which dangled a bunch of keys.

She had a double melattie flower in her thick heavy tresses, which, in the midst of that ebon-black mass of hair, looked like a pretty white rose. Just then her face was covered with a rich flush caused partly by the exertion of her long walk, partly by the pleasant coolness of the morning air; but this rich colour added animation to her pretty features, and blended most harmoniously with the deep bronze of her complexion.

The experienced eye of the concealed fiscal functionary did not allow a single one of these charms to escape it. Yes, there were certain cases in which Mokesuep was by no means insensible to the beautiful, though its contemplation generally awakened evil passions in his breast; and not unfrequently led to criminal designs. What might have happened had he walked alone with Dalima to Banjoe Pahit, who can tell. For the present the appearance of Singomengolo forced him to remain in hiding.

When the girl had come close to the hut, she asked again: "What is the matter? tell me!"

"Come in with me," replied the opium-spy, "and I will let you know why your father has been taken into custody."

As he said these words, Dalima suddenly uttered a loud shriek. Singomengolo thought, of course, that the news he had told her and his rough manner of conveying it, had wrung that cry from the young girl; but Dalima had turned round abruptly and was trying to run away as fast as her feet would carry her. The fact is, she had, through the half open door of the hut seen the odious face of Lim Ho gazing at her with eyes dilated with passion. That sight made the poor girl turn and dart away; but she had hardly gone a few yards before Singomengolo overtook her, and grasping her wrists, tried, by main force, to drag her along with him into the hut. Dalima resisted with all her might. She screamed for help, she kicked at her captor and tried to bite the hands with which he held her arms tightly clasped. In fact she fought as desperately as a wild cat, determined to resist and defend herself to the very last. She was in hopes also that her cries might possibly be heard, for she was under the impression that just now she had seen a European on the pathway which crossed the road she was taking. Any other man but Mokesuep would have flown to the rescue of the poor child; who knows to what excess of heroism even he might have allowed himself to be carried—not indeed out of any feeling of kindly sympathy or from any chivalrous promptings; but in the hope of perhaps — Yes—in such a mind as his the foulest thoughts will spring even as venomous toad-stools on an unclean soil. But —he also had caught sight of Lim Ho—he had noticed that face burning with ignoble passion. At a glance he understood what was going on, and, at the same time, he resolved to keep perfectly quiet in order that he might reap the fullest advantage out of the situation.

Lim Ho's father was an enormously wealthy man, and when the safety or reputation of his son was concerned he would not mind coming down handsomely—a couple of thousand guilders or so were nothing to a man of that kind.

Poor little Dalima! In utter despair she had flung herself to the ground, most heartrending were her shrieks of agony, help! help! but it was all in vain. The mean wretch who might, by merely raising his hand so to speak, have set her free, kept himself snugly concealed. He looked upon the struggle with cynical eye, nay was actually gloating with satisfaction at the glimpses which now and then he caught of the charms, which, in the violence of her resistance, Dalima could not always keep concealed. This went on for some little time, and Singomengolo began to feel that it was impossible for him to drag her along any further without assistance from Lim Ho. He called to the Chinaman to come to his aid. The latter at once obeyed the call, came out of the hut, and tried to clasp the girl in his arms and thus carry her along. But when, in that attempt, he got a very painful bite in the ear, the wretch became mad with fury. He laid hold of the mass of hair which in the struggle had become loosened, and was now quite unrolled, and twisting his hand into the heavy tresses while Singomengolo still held the girl's wrists, he dragged her by main force into the hut. For a considerable time after that the fearful shrieks "Help! help! toean!" were still heard; but gradually they grew fainter and fainter until at length they ceased altogether. In the very far distance rifle shots still resounded; but even if Dalima could have heard them in the excitement of the struggle, she must have understood that her voice could not possibly reach so far, and that, in any case, if help did come, it must come too late.

How did Dalima happen to be on the fatal spot at that early hour?

The reader may remember how that, after having accomplished his heroic deed in the dessa Kaligaweh, Singomengolo had ridden away and had taken the direction of the lonely hut in the hill-country; and how, on his arrival, he had sent the man who lived there as his messenger to Santjoemeh. This man had two commissions to execute. In the first place he was told to go and give into Lim Ho's own hands a little note with which Singo had entrusted him, and, after having done that, he was to call at the Residence and was to tell baboe Dalima that her father Setrosmito had suddenly been taken dangerously ill and that he was most anxious to see her. The messenger, who was a very shrewd and clever fellow, had at once jumped on the back of one of those small and ugly, but well-nigh indefatigable Javanese ponies, whose muscles of steel seem never to tire and carry them in a surprisingly short space of time over vast distances. It was about eleven o'clock when he reached the stately mansion of babah Lim Yang Bing. He was very lucky, for he was not kept waiting a single instant, as Lim Ho happened to be within at the time. The son of the rich opium farmer lay reclining luxuriously upon a splendid divan, his long Chinese pipestem was between his lips and by his side on a small table stood a cup of arrack. He was listening in a kind of rapture to two of his servants, who, like himself, were children of the Celestial Empire. These fellows seated on low ivory stools were twanging on a kind of two-stringed fiddle or guitar, and were drawing tones out of their instruments which would not only have horrified a Vieuxtemps or a Paganini, but would have instantly dispersed even a meeting of tom-cats who, in the matter of harmony, are not usually reckoned to be exacting. Lim Ho no sooner caught sight of Singomengolo's emissary, than he jumped up from the couch, grasped the letter which the man held out to him, and eagerly scanned the very few words it contained. It was a document brief and laconic as a telegram but, to Lim Ho, of the deepest significance. The words it contained were only these: "Everything ready, be here by seven in the morning." The Chinaman pulled out his watch, he looked at the time while he asked the messenger what the weather was like.

"Bright moonlight, babah," was the man's reply.

Lim Ho then dismissed him, flinging him a rix-dollar, and telling him to be specially careful how he discharged his second commission. He ordered him to come and report the result to him, then he ordered his horse to be saddled and waited.

The man did not find his second task quite such an easy one to perform as the former. The Resident van Gulpendam and his wife were seated with some visitors at the usual card-tables; but the daughter of the house had already retired to her own room, and had given her baboe leave to go to bed without waiting up any longer. The fellow found it therefore necessary to go to the back of the premises, and at length he contrived to get one of the servants to go and rouse Dalima.

The young girl was terribly shocked at hearing the dreadful tidings of her father, whom the rascal represented as being in a dying state. She at once rushed into the pandoppo and entered the bedroom of her young mistress who, fortunately, had not yet retired to rest.

"Nana, give me leave!" she cried, in the greatest agitation, as soon as she had opened the door.

"Come," said Anna, "what is the matter with you? do try and be calm." The young lady had perceived at once that there was something very wrong, and tried to quiet her servant's excitement by herself remaining perfectly cool and self-possessed.

Thereupon Dalima told her that a man had just arrived from Kaligaweh with a message from her father who was lying at death's door, and who wished, for the last time perhaps, to see his daughter.

"Oh, Nana," begged the poor girl, "do try and get me leave to go home!"

"But, Dalima," objected Anna, "what is the time?" And looking at a handsome clock on a console close by, she continued, "Why it is close upon midnight!— It is out of the question— You could not possibly go out in the dark!"

"Oh!" cried Dalima, in pleading tones, "Nana knows that I am very brave. I know the way perfectly. I shall take the short cut over the hills; by that road I shall get to Kaligaweh without meeting anybody."

"That is just it," rejoined Anna; "it is that very solitude that I am most frightened at. You might come across a tiger or a wild boar."

"Why, Nana! there are no tigers anywhere in the neighbourhood; if there were we must have heard of them, and as for boars, I am not the least bit afraid of them, they always run away if they possibly can. Do pray, dearest Nana, get me leave to go. I promise you that by to-morrow night I shall be back again."

"I don't at all like the idea of it, Dalima. What will mamma say?"

"Oh, Nana dear," cried the baboe, in despair, "do pray go and try—do pray go and ask madam!"

"She is quite sure to refuse," said Anna.

"Why should she?" persisted the girl.

"She will be just as much afraid as I am that in the darkness of the night some accident may happen to you. How can you possibly dare to undertake such a journey, Dalima?"

"My father is dying—he wants to see me!" cried Dalima. "That is quite enough to give me courage for anything, Miss Anna. I would go to Kaligaweh even if I knew that the road was full of ghosts—yes, if there were a ghost behind every tree! Yet, I am much more frightened of ghosts than of beasts or of men. Nana, I beg and pray—do go and ask your mother!"

"Well," said the tender-hearted young girl, "I will go and try; but mind you, I know it will not be of the slightest use."

"Thank you, Nana, thank you."

Thereupon Miss Anna rose from the divan upon which she had taken a seat after she had admitted Dalima. She thrust her dainty little feet into a pair of slippers she had carelessly thrown off. The young girl was already partially undressed, and had been reclining in only her sarong and kabaai; but she very soon threw about her a richly embroidered morning gown, with a few turns of her dexterous hand she twisted the rich mass of her loose-hanging hair into a knot, and ran to the front-gallery in which her parents and the other card-players were still engaged in their game.

To her great surprise fair Laurentia made no difficulty at all, and at once acceded to her daughter's request, stipulating only that, before setting out, Dalima should finish some needle-work which she had given her to do and which she particularly wished to have ready by the morning.

Oh, no! Mrs. van Gulpendam had no objection whatever to Dalima's going to Kaligaweh; on the contrary, she thought it very praiseworthy in the girl that she showed so much devotion to her parents. A honey-sweet smile hovered on her lips as she gave her gracious permission, and no one—least of all her pure and innocent daughter—could have guessed at the awful abyss of wickedness which lurked behind that sunny smile.

Highly pleased with the result of her attempt, Anna hastened with her good news to Dalima, and in the kindness of her heart she gave up a considerable portion of her night's rest to assist her baboe in getting through her task of needle-work.

It is a dreadful thing to have to say; but Laurentia had not made that stipulation about finishing the work without an object. Her object was to delay Dalima's departure, so that she might not reach the hut in the middle of the night, and, in the darkness, perhaps pass it unobserved. Diligently assisted by her mistress, the baboe was able to set out on her journey about three o'clock in the morning. After having affectionately taken leave, Dalima left the premises by the back-way through a small garden gate, of which Anna had procured her the key. This gate took her straight into the road which led over the hills to Kaligaweh. The moon was shining brightly in the heavens, and thus the girl was able to walk along rapidly, and soon she lost sight of Santjoemeh while not a single thought of danger crossed her brain.

Lim Ho had been informed by Singomengolo's messenger that the pretty baboe had received the news of her father's illness—the reader however knows that a far different calamity had befallen Setrosmito—so he said in a highly satisfied tone:

"That is all right. You must be tired out, and I don't suppose you care to return to your hut to-night? Eh?"

"No, babah," was the man's answer.

"Very well, my people will show you a bedroom, you can go and have a rest. To-morrow I will pay you for your service."

As soon as the fellow had disappeared, Lim Ho consulted his watch.

"Nearly one o'clock," he muttered to himself, and then aloud he added:

“Than Loa, is the horse ready saddled?”

The servant replied with a couple of Chinese words, whereupon Lim Ho rose. He put on a kind of cap without peak, in shape not at all unlike a Scotch bonnet, then he snatched up a riding-whip and leaped into the saddle.

“Don't go to sleep—keep good watch—mind,” he cried to his servant as he rode off, and setting spurs to his horse he was soon out of sight.

The main road which he took was a much longer one than the narrow foot-path which Dalima had chosen; but by starting thus early he knew he could easily get before her. He did not know that before she could set off to her father's bedside the poor girl would have a good deal of sewing to do, and he thought therefore that he had to hurry in order to be in time at the hut. But his horse was a fine animal of Persian breed, and he felt confident that it would bring him to the spot before Dalima could possibly reach it.

It was about half-past three when he dismounted and joined Singomengolo, whom he found waiting for him.

The pair of villains sat down to consult about the best way of carrying out their infamous attempt. During this consultation Lim Ho repeatedly showed signs of impatience at Dalima's unexpected delay. They were still talking together when the day began to dawn, and presently the sun rose, when, of a sudden, a dreadful outburst was heard in the far distance—a noise was heard of yelling, of rattling, of banging—it seemed as if the world was coming to an end. Lim Ho started up in terror from the mat upon which he was seated by the side of the opium spy.

“What on earth may that be?” he cried.

“Oh,” replied Singomengolo as calmly as possible, “that is nothing at all—only the toean Controller of Banjoe Pahit going on a pig-hunt—the dessa folk of that place and of Kaligaweh are beginning to beat up the game.”

“How do you know that?” asked Lim Ho.

“I was at Kaligaweh yesterday, and there I met the Controller and the company he has with him; they came to make the necessary arrangements for the day's hunting.”

“You were at Kaligaweh?” asked Lim Ho.

“Of course I was, babah,” replied Singo quietly. “I was there,” he continued with a nasty smirk, “to catch old Setrosmito at opium-smuggling.”

“Aye, aye,” said Lim Ho, “that's true, I know now.”

Lim Ho pronounced these words in a tone of voice which showed that to him the infamous plot whereby a victim had been removed out of his father's way, was the most trifling incident in the world, a bagatelle which had wholly escaped his memory.

“And did you succeed in finding opium?”

“Of course I did,” replied Singomengolo, “you know well enough, babah, that I always succeed when it suits me to try.”

“Yes, yes,” said Lim Ho in a patronising way, “you are a clever fellow, there is no doubt about that. Dalima's father has, I suppose, been got rid of at least for a few weeks?”

“Yes, for a longer time than a few weeks,” replied Singo very significantly.

“How so? Has anything else happened then?”

“Setrosmito has run amokh and has killed a countryman of yours outright, and severely wounded a policeman. It was precious nearly all up with me too; but I managed to slip away from him in the very nick of time.”

“Good! good!” said Lim Ho, gleefully rubbing his hands together. “So that?” he continued.

“So that,” remarked Singomengolo, “Dalima's father, if they don't hang him, will be at the very least imprisoned for life.”

“You know,” said Lim Ho, “that was wonderfully cleverly managed. But what's up now?”

In the distance a well sustained rifle-fire was heard, in fact the chase had begun.

“It is only the gentlemen in the Djoerang Pringapoes. They are firing at the wild-pigs I suppose. Allah prosper them!”

“But,” said Lim Ho, “may not those white fellows get into our way, the ravine, you know, is not so very far off.”

“The toeans,” said Singo, “are a great deal too much engrossed in their sport to take any notice of what we are about. For myself, I much prefer to hear them blazing away yonder to their heart's content in the Djoerang Pringapoes, than to know that they are sitting quill-driving in their offices. Your white man with a pen in his hand is a much more formidable creature, and is much more formidably armed too, than when he handles a rifle.”

Thus they sat talking and listening to what was going on beneath them in the Djoerang, while time was rapidly passing away.

“But Dalima does not seem to be coming,” sighed Lim Ho, with impatience.

“Yes, she is,” said Singo, “yonder on that path between the rice-fields I see some one—that must be she.”

"Look, look!" cried Lim Ho, in consternation, "there from the ravine comes a white man—now we have lost our chance."

Singomengolo turned his eyes in the direction which Lim Ho indicated, and, as he looked, he muttered a deep curse; he saw at once that the Chinaman had not been mistaken. Yet, he could not make out at all who it could be so quietly making his way towards the hut. He was one of the shooting party, there could be no doubt about that, for he carried a rifle and came from the direction of the Djoerang. And that wretched mar-plot must come right across Dalima's path, just as she was coming in the other direction! Everything had been so carefully planned—and now—that brute! It was enough to drive a fellow mad! But the next moment Lim Ho cried out joyously:

"By Jove, it is toean Mouse-head that is coming along there. I know him perfectly well. Now I don't mind a bit. I know him. You may call the baboe as much as you like, there is no danger. I will square matters easily enough with that fellow yonder!"

Lim Ho had recognised our friend Mokesuep. As the reader has been told, that gentleman used familiarly to be called by almost everyone in Santjoemeh, "Muizenkop," and this nickname some wags had translated into Javanese. Thus he went by the name of Kapala tikoes, or the Mouse-head. Singomengolo also recognised the exciseman of Santjoemeh, and now he no longer felt much apprehension that his detestable plot would be frustrated.

"A mere matter of money," said he to the Chinaman, with a significant smile.

As Dalima came to the crossway, and was about to enter the path which ran down to Kaligaweh, the opium-spy had left the hut, and was preparing to call to her to stop, when he saw the European hastily conceal himself behind the clump of bushes by the roadside. This move on the part of Mokesuep completely reassured the accomplices, and their wicked plot was crowned with the success with which the reader has already been made acquainted.

Even had Mokesuep felt any inclination to present himself in the character of rescuer, that impulse was wholly extinguished the moment Lim Ho appeared upon the scene. The wretched coward only hid himself more closely behind his screen of leaves as he muttered:

"By Jove, dame Fortune is playing into my hand—no one but an ass would refuse so fair an offer."

Meanwhile the despairing cries of poor little Dalima were gradually dying away as her strength began to fail, and as she became utterly exhausted.

"Help, help! toean, help!" was the last piercing shriek which re-echoed in that solitude. The only response, alas! was the well-sustained rifle-fire in the distance.

CHAPTER XIX.

HELP! HELP!

BUT yet, poor Dalima's shrieks and wild cries for help had been heard.

That part of the mountain cleft, into which the hunters had plunged in pursuit of the retreating wild boars, did not extend very far, it was not longer than about a thousand yards; but the bottom of the ravine was just there exceedingly winding, and, as it followed the tortuous course of the small stream Banjoe Pahit, it was strewn all over with huge fragments of stone, while the dark-grey walls of volcanic trachyte towered up almost perpendicularly to the height of more than fifty or sixty yards.

In that narrow pass the scene of confusion was utterly indescribable. The grunting and squealing of the maddened herd of swine, the yelling and rattling of the beaters who, on seeing the animals charge back, had resumed their unearthly noise, the almost incessant crashing of the fire from the breech-loading rifles—all these sounds, echoing and re-echoing within that narrow rock-bound gorge, made a din which was absolutely deafening.

The hunted animals now desperate and infuriated, madly charged at the line of native beaters, who seemed to them less formidable than their European foes. For a few moments the dessa folk attempted to make a stand, and thrusting about furiously with their lances, they made some ineffectual efforts to turn the beasts back again into the ravine. But they very soon had to give way before the charge of the formidable tusks, and took to their heels altogether as soon as the rifle bullets began to screech over their heads. Those cylindero-conical projectiles from the new-fashioned rifles make such a horrid screaming as they speed overhead on their deadly errand, that it is no wonder they demoralised the poor natives altogether. In less than no time the line of beaters had vanished before the charge of the boars, as the mountain mist before the morning sun. The greater part of the Javanese managed to swarm up the high rocky peaks, others darted up the trees; but not a single one ventured to remain within reach of the sharp tusks of the wild boars.

The animals were however greatly diminished in numbers and not very many of them succeeded, under the incessant rifle-fire, in getting clear of the pass. Upward of fifteen carcases lay stretched motionless on the ground; but a far greater number had received wounds more or less severe; which, however, in that climate were sure to prove fatal.

"Forward, boys, forward!" cried Verstork, excited by the success they had gained; "forward, we must not let a single one of that mischievous brood escape!"

That, however, was much more easily said than done. The hunters continued to press the retreating game, and contrived to fire many a shot and to bring down many a victim; but the pigs were uncommonly fleet of foot and now that the chain of beaters was broken and there was nothing to stop them, they were soon lost to sight amid the inextricable tangle of shrubs, tree-trunks, and boulders which encumbered the bottom of the ravine. Our European friends did their very utmost to keep up with the game; but it was a task which would have required nothing less than the nimbleness and dexterity of an orang-outang to accomplish, perhaps even that animal might have had to give up the pursuit.

Yes, there they stood at length, dead beat, their clothes in tatters, their hands torn by the thorns through which in the heat of the excitement they had forced their way, in one word, completely pumped out and exhausted, there they stood panting and gasping for breath. At length Verstork managed somewhat to recover his wind, and shouted to his friends to rally them.

"Where is Grashuis?" asked the Controller, looking around him.

"And where is Grenits?" van Rheijn managed to gasp out.

They were nowhere to be seen, and their friends were beginning to feel anxious about them, when a couple of rifle-shots in the distance informed the hunters that the two missing men were still obstinately bent on continuing the pursuit.

"That will never do," said Verstork, "we must go after them, one can never tell what may happen and what need there may be of assistance. But," continued he, "can any of you tell me where the shots came from?"

Every hand was raised at once; but they unfortunately all pointed in different directions. Had there been hands enough they would, no doubt, have indicated every point in the compass.

"There," said one.

"No, no, there," cried another.

"You are wrong," said a third, "they came from this side."

"That's a confounded nuisance," said Verstork much perplexed, "the shots took me quite by surprise and I really don't know from what direction they came. We must wait a bit, perhaps they will fire again."

"I am precious glad of it," said van Beneden, "now we can sit down and rest a bit on that rock yonder. I am regularly fagged out."

He had not, however, a very long rest, for barely ten minutes had elapsed before another shot was heard, and this was followed almost immediately after by a second discharge. This time the reports were evidently further off than before; but there was no mistake about the direction from whence they came.

"Come gentlemen," cried Verstork, as he snatched up his rifle again, "come, gentlemen, this way!"

"Might we not wait a few minutes longer?" pleaded van Beneden, "I am dead tired."

"Meanwhile," said the Wedono, as he pointed to the smooth trunk of a komessoe tree, "I shall get up into that tree. Perhaps I may catch sight of them."

The Javanese dessa-chief was a nimble young fellow, and using his hands and feet he soon was in the top.

"Can you see anything, Wedono?" cried Verstork.

"No, nothing yet, kandjeng toean," was the man's reply. "But—wait a bit—Yes, there they are yonder—both of them. They are clambering along the side of the ravine still after the pigs. But it is a good way off!"

"Come, gentlemen," said the Controller, "it won't do to sit here, we must be off at once, we must try and get up to them."

Meanwhile Leendert Grashuis and Theodoor Grenits had been running on ahead and were pursuing with the indomitable energy and hot enthusiasm of youth, a small family of pigs consisting of one gigantic boar, a sow and four young ones.

Helter skelter they rushed on, pursuers and pursued, over and under rocks, over and right through thorny bushes, sometimes by the side of the small stream, sometimes in the water in which the animals would plunge and disappear for a moment in the whirling eddies, and then reappear again vigorously swimming and struggling. Now and then, as the beasts were scrambling up the face of a rock, the two hunters would catch a momentary glimpse of their prey. Then they would try to steady themselves in order to get a fair shot; but before they could pull the trigger, the beasts had again disappeared among the stones and bushes, and then after them again in spite of the heat and fatigue. This continued for a while until the old boar led his party up the steep slope of the ravine wall, evidently with the view of gaining the open field at the top along which they could fly with greater speed. But, alas for them! that move on the part of their leader gave the rifles fair play. As soon as the animals began to ascend they became visible among the stunted grass which grew on the slope, and two shots resounded almost simultaneously. One of the little ones, mortally wounded, rolled down the slope and the old sow flew madly to its assistance. But the pains the poor animal took to get its young on its legs again and to push it along were all in vain, her instinct seemed to tell her that she must hurry back along with the others in order to escape from the deadly bullets. A moment or two afterwards, another young one lost its footing and began to stumble down the slope. The mother was on the spot again and trying to help it along. It was a touching sight indeed to see that mother defending and taking care of her little one, to see how she strove to push it along very gently yet very strongly too with her pointed snout, uttering the while the most loving and encouraging grunts. But hunters have no bowels of mercy. Scarcely had the pair proceeded a few yards before the two rifles cracked again, and sow and young one rolled to the very bottom of the ravine. As she fell she glared defiance at her enemies, while she kept her eye still fixed on her offspring and uttered a sharp squeal of warning to her mate above. At that moment a third shot was fired and the third little pig came rolling down to the very feet of the hunters.

The boar thereupon turned to bay uttering the most fearful grunts, turning up his bristles and drawing back his lips so as to show not only his formidable tusks but also the teeth which were white as ivory and sharp as chisels. Another shot was fired but missed and, when the smoke of the powder had cleared away, the boar and the only young one which was left had disappeared round a corner.

But Grenits and Grashuis did not for a moment think of leaving him to escape, and they at once proceeded to clamber up the steep rock in pursuit. They knew that to cut off the boar's retreat they must gain the top before him. But they found it no child's play. They kept on climbing with the most dogged determination; but they found the rocky slope, upon which even the split hoof of a wild boar could hardly keep a precarious foothold, a very dangerous path for a foot encased in a European boot. At length, after almost superhuman efforts, they had managed to clamber up to the top and, as they panted for breath, they anxiously looked around; but could discover not a vestige of the animals they had so painfully pursued. They had no doubt gained the top of the rock before them and had disappeared in the tangled underwood which covered the plain. To hunt any further for the fugitives would be sheer waste of time and of strength. Completely fagged out with their exertions, the two friends were about to throw themselves down on the grass under the shadow of some low bushes, when suddenly Grenits uttered a sharp cry. He found himself face to face with the terrible wild boar. The animal, on gaining the top of the rock with its young one, had, likewise exhausted, stretched itself out to rest, thinking it had shaken off the pursuit of its enemies. Now, however, it fancied that it was attacked in its very lair, and too weary to attempt to escape, it turned to bay and, as such animals will do, when driven to fury, at once assumed the offensive.

Grenits had but just time to jump aside and to bring his rifle into a position of defence. The boar nimbly avoided the bayonet thrust which Theodoor aimed at it, and then furiously turning upon his foe, he charged. It was a very fortunate thing for Grenits that his legs were encased in stout leather gaiters or else the sharp ripping tusk would have inflicted a terrible wound. But though the leather resisted the blow, yet such was the fury of the attack that Grenits lost his balance, fell backward, and for a second was in the most deadly peril.

Had he been alone, the furious beast would undoubtedly have flung itself upon him and in that defenceless position he must have been ripped open in an instant. Already the boar was darting at his fallen foe. For an instant Theodoor shuddered as he saw his bloodshot eye and felt the hot breath of the monster in his face. Then he closed his eyes and awaited the fatal thrust. But at that moment the beast uttered a wild grunt of rage and turned away from Grenits to face another opponent.

All this, though it takes some time to tell, had passed with the rapidity of lightning; but short though the time was, yet Leendert Grashuis had been able to shove a cartridge into the breech of his gun and to bring his sword-bayonet to the charge. He had no chance of firing however, for the shot would have been much more likely to injure his prostrate friend than to kill the boar. Not the fraction of a second was to be lost if he would save Grenits' life. Theodoor, as we have seen, was already lying helpless on the ground and the next instant must have been fatal. Then with all his might Grashuis drove his bayonet at the infuriated creature. The thrust caused a painful wound but glanced off on the right shoulder blade, while the monster at once turned to confront this fresh assailant. The boar then tried to deal Grashuis a blow with its prominent tusks, but was caught on the bayonet. The force of the blow was such that the weapon bent like a hoop and was driven up to the muzzle into the boar's throat. For an instant Leendert thought of drawing his weapon back; but at once seeing the impossibility of doing so he pulled the trigger and the animal received the entire charge full in the head. With a terrific bound it sprang back tearing the rifle out of Grashuis' hands, then it turned round once or twice and fell down twitching convulsively in the throes of death. A few seconds afterwards, all was over.

All this had passed so quickly that the two friends scarcely realised what had happened. They stood for a second or two gazing at the death-struggle as if they were stunned and dazed; but presently the truth dawned upon them, and they began to understand how dreadful was the peril from which they had so narrowly escaped. Then they embraced and congratulated one another most heartily, Theodoor Grenits especially felt that he had escaped death as by a miracle.

After the first excitement had somewhat abated, human infirmity began to make itself felt. The wild pursuit of the game, the oppressive heat, the painful clambering up and along the ravine wall, and last but not least, the desperate hand to hand struggle, which followed this exertion, had exhausted our two friends so utterly and so completely, that they could no longer keep their feet, but flung themselves full length upon the grass.

Thus they lay, panting and striving to recover their breath, when, after the lapse of a few minutes, Grenits thought that in the bushes close by he caught a glimpse of the last little pig that had escaped the butchery. Without taking the trouble to rise, he slipped a cartridge into his breech-loader, put his weapon to his shoulder and fired in the direction where he had fancied he had seen the little beast disappear in the bushes. The echo of the report reverberated grandly through the ravine like a clap of thunder—on and on rolled the stately sound, gradually growing fainter and fainter, until at length it died away softly rumbling in the far distance.

But the sound had not quite passed away, when Grashuis, as if suddenly moved hy some spring, raised himself upon his elbow:

"Did you hear that?" asked he, in a tone almost of alarm.

"Hear what?" said Grenits, "the report of my rifle—Of course I heard it."

"No, no," said the other, "I fancied I heard a human voice just now! Listen."

Yes, yonder in the far distance, but yet audibly and distinctly was heard the cry:

"Help! Help! Help!"

"By heaven!" cried Grenits, jumping up, "that's a woman's voice!"

"Help! help! toean!"

"A woman's voice," repeated Grashuis, "and crying out for help! Listen again."

"Help! help! toean!"

"I can see no other toeans besides ourselves. Our comrades are far away in the ravine—and the voice does not come from that direction at all," continued Grashuis.

"But," said Grenits, as he looked all around, "I can see nothing anywhere, Leendert!"

"No more can I," replied the other. "The reflection from the water on those rice-fields dazzles me painfully."

"Look yonder—I fancy I can see a hut—surely the cry must have come from there," said Grashuis.

Just then the cry was heard again, but much more faintly.

"Help! help! toean!"

"That is a woman's voice," repeated Grenits, "she is crying to us for help."

"But," said Grashuis, "what toeans can she be calling to?"

"What is that to me?" exclaimed Grenits. "Come along, some poor thing is calling for help. Come along, I don't feel a bit tired now."

Before they hastened away, the two friends cast a look at the ravine, out of which they had clambered a short time before—and there they caught sight of their comrades who were following them, and who were, in their turn, preparing to gain the summit of the rock.

Grenits thereupon fired off his gun, in order to attract their attention, and when he saw that he had succeeded, he called to them, at the top of his voice, while he stretched out his arm towards the west:

"There, there!" he cried. Then both hurried away.

"What did Theodoor say?" asked Verstork. "Could you make it out?"

"Not a word," replied van Nerekool, "he was much too far off; but something strange seems to have happened."

"Come let us hurry on," said Verstork.

The little party then began to toil up the steep. They were not, however, fired by the same enthusiasm which had inspired their friends, and thus they took thrice as long to accomplish the ascent. When they at length reached the summit, they could, in the distance, see Grenits and Grashuis running at the top of their speed between the rice-fields. The latter turned for an instant and waved his arm as if to urge his comrades to greater speed.

"Help! help! toean!" was heard again, but this time the cry was so faint as to be barely audible.

The two European gentlemen had, however, by this time, got much nearer to the hut.

"Come on, come on," shouted Grenits, hoping that he would urge his friends to greater speed.

"Are you sure," asked Grashuis, "that we are going in the right direction? It appears to me as if we were getting further away from the sound."

But they had no time for considering the matter, for, at that moment a female form was seen rushing from the hut and running to meet them.

"Help, toean, help!" she cried, as she fell down at their feet.

It was a Javanese girl, whom neither Grenits nor his friend recognised. With dishevelled hair and stained with blood, she rolled on the grass as she covered her face with both hands.

"Help, toean, help," she moaned.

Astounded by the strange and unexpected apparition, the two hunters stood looking at the poor girl before them. In their amazement they knew not what to do. Grenits, however, who could not bear to see a human being thus grovelling at his feet, took hold of the girl's arm and tried to raise her from the ground; but she shook off his hand.

"I am ashamed," she muttered, as she tried to cast the thick masses of hair over her bosom.

Just then a man, a Javanese, came darting out of the hut, and seeing the poor girl he ran up to her at once. With a rough grasp he laid hold of her arm, and strove to pull her up.

"Ah!" she exclaimed; then, as she recognised the fellow, she tore herself away from him with a look of the utmost terror.

"Help, toean, toean, help!" she begged, turning again to the two European gentlemen.

"Let go that woman's arm!" shouted Grenits, boiling with rage.

"What have you got to do with her?" asked Grashuis, who now recognised Singomengolo.

"She has been smuggling opium," replied Singo, and turning to the girl he hissed in a threatening tone, "Come along, will you, or else—"

"Take pity on me, gentlemen, take pity on me!" cried the wretched woman.

"Come along, will you!" shouted Singomengolo, furiously, as he tried by main force to drag her away.

"Let go that woman, I say—or else I'll smash your skull in!" shouted Grenits, raising the butt of his rifle.

Meanwhile Grashuis had seized Singomengolo round the waist and was attempting to drag him backward.

"I am a bandoelan," said the Javanese spy, somewhat haughtily; "I am a bandoelan; you gentlemen will be sorry for having threatened me and laid hands upon me." And, turning to the woman, he said again, "Come along!"

"Once again, let her go," cried Grenits, and this time in a tone of voice which plainly showed that he would stand no nonsense and was in deadly earnest. Indeed he was on the point of bringing down the butt of his gun crash upon the skull of the Chinaman, when he felt someone grasping his arm from behind and heard a voice whispering in his ear:

"Take care Theodoor, take care, it is a dangerous thing to meddle with those opium fellows."

Theodoor looked round, and, to his great surprise, he saw that it was Mokesuep who thus warned him.

"You, Muizenkop!" cried he. "Where have you sprung from?"

"I lost my way," was the reply. "But for heaven's sake keep cool or you will get yourself into trouble."

"What do I care," shouted Grenits; "let go my arm, I will soon settle the matter with that confounded opium spy!"

Singomengolo stood there before him with an indescribable look of ferocious malice on his evil countenance. He had laid his hand on the hilt of his kris and, proud and impetuous as he naturally was, he would undoubtedly have answered any act of violence with a stab of his knife, if indeed the first blow had not laid him senseless.

For a moment he stood glaring at the European with bold and glittering eye. Then suddenly he seemed to change his mind. He released the girl's arm, for, across the rice fields, he now saw another group advancing rapidly. In this group his quick sight had at once recognised not only the Controller of Banjoe Pahit but also the wedono of the district, and at the sight his sallow face grew pale.

"What's all this about?" asked Verstork as he came up to the spot.

"That wretched woman has been smuggling opium, Kandjeng toean," replied Singomengolo.

"That woman?"

"But—" cried van Nerekool, in amazement. "But, it is Dalima!"

"Dalima?"

"Yes Dalima, the baboe of the Resident."

"Good," said van Rheijn, with a laugh. "Our Resident keeps a baboe—a stock of feeding bottles also—no doubt!"

Van Nerekool turned crimson. He had not wished to say, "the baboe of the Resident's daughter."

Verstork removed one of the girl's hands from her face.

"Yes—it is indeed Dalima! And you say that she has smuggled opium?" he continued, turning to Singomengolo.

He made a sign to one of the wedono's servants, who at once gave the young girl a shawl, into which she hastily wrapped herself.

"Most assuredly," replied the bandoelan, "I have searched her myself."

"Indeed you have," rejoined Verstork, "and torn off her clothing in the process?"

"She would not allow—"

"And it is you then," continued Verstork, "who have so shamefully ill-treated her?"

"But what was I to do, Kandjeng toean? She offered resistance, and—look here, I found this upon her!"

As he spoke, Singomengolo held up to the Controller's view a small box. This little box was strangely similar to the one which, the evening before, he had delivered to Verstork. Indeed, if the latter had not with his own hand carefully sealed it and had not sent it off himself to Santjoemeh he could have sworn that this second box was the identical one he had seen before.

"Did you find that box in the girl's possession?" asked he, very sternly.

"Yes, I did," replied Singomengolo, unabashed.

"I have not smuggled opium!" cried poor Dalima, still cowering on the ground. "I have not smuggled anything; they dragged me into the hut and have ill-used me shamefully."

"But," asked Verstork, "what brought you here at all?"

"I was on my way to Kaligaweh. Last night some man came to the Residence, he came to tell me that my father was dying. Then I got leave from the njonja and from nonna Anna to go and see him."

"Leave from the njonja and from nonna Anna, you said?" asked Verstork.

"And from nonna Anna, yes, Kandjeng toean," said Dalima.

"Then those two ladies will be able to bear witness to that I suppose?" asked Verstork.

"Yes, Kandjeng toean."

"And I can bring witnesses to swear that this girl had opium in her possession," interruped Singo.

"Witnesses!" said Verstork. "Who are they?"

Singomengolo cast a crafty look around him ere he replied. He saw Mokesuep quietly entering the little hut. That gentleman had taken advantage of the confusion and had quietly sneaked away, while he had a chance to do so unperceived. He had reasons of his own for so doing; but Singomengolo' lip curled with a disdainful smile.

"Just now," quoth he, "there was a Dutch gentleman here."

"A Dutch gentleman!" echoed Verstork, now quite losin his temper. "A Dutch gentleman! take care what you a saying. Are you trying to make a fool of me? I won't stand such impudence, do you hear!"

"Muizenkop was here just now," remarked Grenits interrupting him.

"Muizenkop? why I have seen nothing of him all the morning!"

"I don't know how it is," replied Grenits, "he told me something about losing his way."

"But, what has become of him?" asked the Controller.

"That I don't know—anyhow, he was standing here a minute ago."

"But," continued Verstork speaking to Singomengolo. "You said two witnesses—who is the other?"

"Lim Ho," was the fellow's insolent reply.

"Lim Ho!" exclaimed van Nerekool in amazement. "And Dalima in that condition! Now I understand all about it!"

"Lim Ho has terribly ill-used me," sobbed the poor girl "and—" but she could not utter another word.

"And?" persisted Verstork.

"He and that man there held me fast."

"You villainous brute!" shouted van Nerekool as he shook his clenched fist in the wretch's face.

"She has smuggled opium," replied the spy without flinching. "She has smuggled opium, and I found it upon her—that is all. The gentlemen must try not to lose their tempers. The girl is simply telling a parcel of lies."

"I do not lie," cried Dalima, "I have not smuggled—my condition shows plainly enough how they have treated me."

At a gesture from the controller a couple of oppassers lifted up the young girl from the ground. Van Nerekool assisted them, and called for another covering to wrap around her.

Then turning to the Controller he said, "A foul outrage has been committed here—the way that poor girl has been treated is simply infamous!"

Having thus for the moment taken care of Dalima, the company entered the hut.

There they found Mokesuep smoking a friendly cigar with Lim Ho. The latter's ear was bandaged.

"So," said Verstork to Mokesuep without bestowing so much as a look upon the Chinaman. "So you're here!"

"Yes," was the reply, "I am here, I lost my way this morning in the ravine and have been wandering about until I came upon this hut. I then sought shelter from the burning sun. Bah, how hot it is in those open fields!"

All this was said with the greatest self-possession. At the last sentence the wretch actually puffed as if he had really been suffering much from the heat.

"You have been here some time then?" asked Verstork.

"Well yes," was the reply, "about half an hour I should say, if you call that some time."

"You will be called upon to bear witness," said the controller.

"Indeed—bear witness to what?"

"A dreadful outrage has been committed on that girl," continued Verstork.

"An outrage?" asked Mokesuep as if much astonished. "I know nothing at all about it."

"Nothing whatever has taken place here," remarked Singomengolo speaking in Malay; for though he would not use it yet he understood the Dutch language perfectly. "Nothing at all has taken place here," he repeated, "except the discovery of smuggled opium. Is that true or not, babah?" The Chinaman who had risen from his seat when the European gentlemen entered the hut, exchanged looks with Mokesuep, but answered at once, "Nothing else, Kandjeng toean."

"I am not talking to you," said Verstork to the Chinaman, and then turning to Mokesuep he continued.

"That girl, the baboe of the Resident at Santjoemeh, accuses both these men of having perpetrated a terrible crime."

Mokesuep, who did not know Dalima, stood confounded when he learned who she was. The baboe of the Resident! What if that high and mighty one were to take up the cause of his servant? Indeed he did not know what to say or what to do.

"Did you hear my words?" asked the Controller very sternly and very impatiently.

The wretch caught a significant glance of Lim Ho who stood there audaciously puffing at his cigar.

"I have seen nothing whatever of it, Controller," he replied.

"But I," interrupted Singomengolo in a taunting tone of voice, "I accuse that baboe of having smuggled opium—I found it in her possession—the babah and the Dutch gentleman can bear witness to that."

"Is that true?" asked Verstork

The Chinaman did not answer at once, vile and utterly depraved though he was, yet even he hesitated. He could not quite make up his mind utterly to destroy the poor girl whom he had so deeply injured. But Singomengolo gave him a significant look and made him a sign which was almost imperceptible.

"Yes," said Lim Ho at length, "that is perfectly true."

"Is that true?" said Verstork turning to Mokesuep.

"Yes—it is true," replied the latter with the utmost effrontery.

"Did you actually see the bandoelan find this box in the girl's possession?"

"Yes," replied the wretch.

At this word Dalima fell into a dead swoon. The other men present at the scene could not repress gestures of contempt and loathing, for all were firmly convinced of the poor girl's innocence and of the perjured scoundrel's infamy.

"You damned wretch!" shouted Theodoor Grenits beside himself with fury and utterly unable any longer to restrain himself.

A contemptuous smile, accompanied with a still more contemptuous gesture, was Mokesuep s only reply.

That was too much for Grenits. "There! there!" he shouted livid with rage, "there, there! take that." And at the words he dealt the infamous scoundrel two swinging blows in the face.

"Mr. Grenits! Mr. Grenits," cried Verstork in a dignified manner, "Do pray control yourself, do not make my official duty more difficult to perform than it already is."

CHAPTER XX.

A DINNER-PARTY.

A FEW hours later our sportsmen were seated at table in the pandoppo of the Controller's house at Banjoe Pahit. Fritz Mokesuep, however, we need hardly say, was not of the party. William Verstork was a man who, as a rule, could put up with a good deal; but on this occasion he had not cared

to conceal the aversion with which that individual inspired him.

As soon as poor Dalima had been properly attended to, and under escort of a policeman, had been sent off in a tandoe as a prisoner to Santjoemeh, the Controller had told Mokesuep, in pretty plain language, that, after what had taken place between him and Grenits, his company could very well be dispensed with.

"It seems to me," had been Mokesuep's reply, "that the person who inflicted the insult is the one that ought to stand aside."

"Such, no doubt would, under ordinary circumstances, have been my opinion also," returned Verstork, with icy coolness; "but before I can consent to receive you as my guest, you will have to explain to me, in a satisfactory way, how you came to be in this hut, so far from the hunting-ground, and just at the time when the young girl was so shamefully ill-used."

"She has not been—" interrupted Mokesuep.

"Now, pray do not mistake me," resumed Verstork, "I said ill-used, at the present moment I make use of no stronger expression. We found her here half-naked and bleeding, and she was calling upon us for help. She had, therefore, evidently been ill-treated, at present I say nothing more than that. She suffered this ill-treatment in your presence—in your presence, who pretend to be a gentleman; and I repeat what I said just now, you will have to give me satisfactory proof that it was not in your power to assist or defend this poor young girl before I will consent to receive you under my roof."

"But, Mr. Verstork—!"

"If you can clear yourself of the suspicion which, perhaps very unjustly, at present rests upon you, I can assure you that nothing will give me greater pleasure than to hold out my hand to you, indeed you will find me the first to do so, unless my friend Grenits should forestall me."

"In that case," said Grenits, "Mr. Mokesuep will find me perfectly prepared to give him any satisfaction he may require."

"Satisfaction!" sneered Mokesuep, "never you mind about that, I know well enough how to get satisfaction!"

"You refuse then," continued Verstork coldly, "to furnish me with the explanations I require?"

"I owe you no explanations whatever, Mr. Verstork," cried Mokesuep, "I intend to reserve my explanations for the Resident's ear."

"Very well, sir, just as you please," replied Verstork. "In that case I have nothing further to say to you," and with a stiff, formal bow he added: "Pray let me not detain you any longer."

Mokesuep ground his teeth with rage at this direct dismissal; he flung his rifle over his shoulder, and, accompanied by Lim Ho and Singomengolo, who had stood by as silent spectators of the scene, without understanding much of what was going on, he hurried away in the direction of Santjoemeh.

As he went he cried, "You shall pay for this, Mr. Verstork. I shall have my revenge!"

It was a terrible threat, no doubt; but it did not take away the appetite of our friends; and so, as we have said before, a few hours after found them seated at the table in the pandoppo of the Controller at Banjoe Pahit.

The pandoppo of the Controller's house could not, in size or extent, be compared with the splendid gallery in the stately residential mansion at Santjoemeh. But, for that very reason, it was more homely and more comfortable. It lacked the vast empty spaces between the columns, reminding one of a big market-hall, and it had not the lofty roof which made one think of a cathedral. It was, in fact, much more like a cosy sitting-room, and to this air of homely comfort, the tasteful manner in which Verstork had furnished it, contributed not a little. Indeed, this pandoppo was Verstork's ordinary sitting-room, and a very pleasant retreat it was. The big windows, all of them furnished with venetian blinds, gave free access to the breeze, while, on the sunny side, they could be closed so as to exclude the heat; and thus within that gallery it was always deliciously cool. The entire house moreover was surrounded by trees encircling it as with a crown of verdure, and their pleasant shade tempered the glaring light of the tropical day.

There, William Verstork used to sit whenever his presence was not required in his office. There, at sunrise, he sipped his early cup of coffee, there he breakfasted and used to dine. There again he was wont to enjoy his papers and periodicals as in the afternoon he took a cup of tea, and used to dream away the evenings musing within himself, and often wondering whether, in such a place, it was well for a man to be alone.

At any time of the day this pandoppo was a pleasant retreat, and specially gay and comfortable did it look now when the host had gathered his friends around his table,

The very table itself contributed to the gaiety and brightness of the scene.

On that board were displayed the inevitable bowls of rice, cooked by steaming in conical baskets of bamboo, every grain snow-white, distinct and separate. And with this standing dish of rice were served up in small saucers, an endless variety of soups, vegetables, sauces, pickles, and condiments of all kinds. There were chicken-broth, fish-soup, and other thicker kinds of soup. Then a variety of dishes flavoured with Spanish pepper, among which devilled shrimps, devilled eggs, the celebrated little red-fish of Macassar, the bean of the Paskia speciosa and the famous "pirate pepper," so called no doubt on account of its extreme pungency. The more substantial dishes consisted of meat and fish, such as jerked beef, smoked venison, roast or boiled joints, boiled and braised fowl, and a delicious fresh water fish, the Olfromeus Olfax. These and other dishes, too numerous to mention, are generally served up at a complete and well appointed dinner—or as they call it in Java—rice table.

But the object which specially attracted the attention of our Luculluses as they entered the pandoppo, and which made them smack their lips in anticipation of a rare feast, was a sucking pig which stood conspicuous in the centre of the table in a capacious dish. It was roasted whole, was standing upright on its four legs, and had a lemon in its snout. It was a product of the day's hunting, one of the first victims, in fact, which had fallen, and had at once been taken home by one of Verstork's servants to play a prominent part in the entertainment.

Every one of the guests did full justice to the good fare, and all proved themselves to be right valiant trenchermen; but though the grinders were kept busily at work, and though the palates fully appreciated the highly flavoured and succulent dishes, yet the tongues were by no means allowed to remain idle, nor was the conversation suffered to flag around the hospitable board. The reader may well believe there was plenty to talk about.

"That confounded Muizenkop!" quoth Theodoor Grenits, "why, the fellow very nearly made me lose my temper."

"Come, come, don't mention him," replied van Rheijn, "his very name would take away one's appetite."

"By Jove," cried August van Beneden, "that sucking pig is a most delicious morsel."

"Very nice, indeed," remarked van Rheijn. "But, how many of those chaps have we bowled over I wonder?"

"That I cannot tell you," said Verstork.

"But," resumed van Beneden, "we ought to know the number in order that we may be able to judge in how far our expedition may be called successful. How shall we find out?"

"Patience, August, patience," said Verstork with a smile.

"All right, William," continued van Beneden, "you know I have no great stock of that commodity. I wonder how many of those beasts we have knocked over. I saw a good number of them sprawling about."

"The wedono will be here presently with his report," replied Verstork.

"The wedono! Yes, he has disappeared—where can he have got to?"

"Well," said Verstork, "I ordered him and the two loerahs to make a careful search in the Djoerang Pringapoes. He will no doubt soon be here to tell us the result of our day's work."

The words were scarcely spoken, before one of the oppassers came in to announce the arrival of the dessa-chief.

"Show him in!" cried Verstork.

"Well, Wedono," he continued with a smile, "I see you come to share our rice-table, that is very kind of you, I am glad to see you."

The Javanese chief, however, had recoiled in terror. Had the conscientious Mohammedan been a Roman Catholic he would most assuredly have crossed himself. As it was he merely muttered in the direst confusion, "Excuse me, Kandjeng toean! You know that we are not allowed to eat pork."

"But, you can take something else, Wedono—there is beef on the table and fowl and duck and fish—anything you like in fact."

"Thank you, Kandjeng toean, thank you; but all these things have been cooked in the same kitchen as the sucking pig, and, you know our religion forbids us—"

"I am sorry for it, Wedono," replied Verstork.

"I came here, Kandjeng toean," continued the chief, "to give you my report of the day's hunting."

"Very well, Wedono!"

"Seventeen pigs great and small have been killed. The Chinamen at Kaligaweh and at Banjoe Pahit have bought the carcases from the village people and are now busy carting them away."

"Ah, Wedono, those Chinamen know what is good," said Verstork.

"I suppose so, Kandjeng toean," replied the dessa-chief with a forced smile.

"That is a pretty good number I think—is it not, Wedono?" remarked van Rheijn. "Do you think," he continued, "that we have pretty well exterminated them?"

"Pretty nearly," answered the wedono. "A number of our people have gone after the pigs that broke away and have dispatched several of them. There are but a very few left and they have sought for refuge in the high mountain land, so that I do not think that we shall be troubled any more by that mischievous brood."

"Well then, my friends," cried Verstork elated at the success of his expedition, "we may say that we have done a good morning's work. Here's good luck to Banjoe Pahit and the dessa-folk!"

All the guests sprang to their feet and raised their glasses. Van Rheijn thrust a tumbler of beer into the wedono's hand—and with a joyous "hip, hip, hip, hurrah!" a toast was drunk to the inhabitants of the district who had been delivered from their troublesome visitors.

"Has the Kandjeng toean any further orders for me?" asked the wedono. "If not I will beg leave to retire."

"Yes, Wedono—there is something else. In the entrance of the Djoerang Pringapoes there lies a very big old boar, you will know him by his long tusks—I very much wish to have the head."

"Excellent, excellent," exclaimed van Beneden, "*Une hure de sanglier à la sauce piquante*, that will be a rare treat!"

"Hush, August!" said Verstork and, turning again to the wedono he continued, "Then further, I want you at once to open the inquiry in the matter of Dalima."

"Certainly, Kandjeng toean."

"And come to me presently—I must have some talk with you about that affair."

"Very good, Kandjeng toean."

"Presently," cried van Beneden, "presently why—" and then he struck up

"We wont go home till morning . . .
Till daylight doth appear."

The entire company joined in the well-known old tune. When the noise had somewhat subsided, Verstork continued:

“Duty, my friends, before pleasure. You will presently go and have your afternoon nap, then you will take a bath. I shall pursue this inquiry with the help of the wedono. This evening it is my intention to return to Santjoemeh with you; for the first thing to-morrow morning I must have an interview with the Resident. You have understood me, Wedono, have you not?”

“Yes, Kandjeng toean.”

“Very good then, I will not detain you.”

With a courtly bow, the dessa-chief took leave of the company and retired.

The dinner went on; but the mention of Dalima had somewhat dashed the high spirits of the guests. The recollection of the sad event of the morning seemed to cast a chill over them all and to sober down even the merriest of the party.

“Poor little Dalima!” sighed Grashuis, after a few moments' silence during which he had been discussing a duck's wing, “Poor little Dalima! could she be guilty of smuggling opium?”

“Get along with you,” cried van Beneden. “Does that pretty little thing look like a smuggler?”

“Take care, August,” said van Rheijn with a laugh, “a lawyer ought not to allow himself to be influenced by outward appearance. Am I not right, Charles?”

Van Nerekool was not there and then ready with an answer to this appeal; he was in fact busily employed in removing the bones from a splendid slice of fish. But after a moment's pause he said:

“Certainly not—yet, for all that I also am firmly persuaded of the girl's innocence.”

“Of course, of course—the baboe of nonna Anna, eh Charles—*cela va sans dire?*”

“But,” remarked van Rheijn, “the thing that puzzles me is that the opium was found upon her.”

“Do you believe that?” asked another.

“Well I don't know what to say, there is Muizenkop's testimony.”

“What! would you take that scoundrel's word?”

“Aye, aye,” said Verstork very seriously, “the whole business looks ugly enough.”

“As far as I can see,” said Grashuis, “there is but one hope left, and that is that nonna Anna may have influence enough with her father to get the affair hushed up.”

A bitter smile curled van Nerekool's lip, but he uttered not a word.

“Now if Lim Ho, the son of the opium farmer, were not mixed up in the matter,” said Verstork musingly, “why then you might have some reason for that hope—yes—then I think things might be squared; but now—”

“But,” exclaimed van Beneden interrupting his friend, “can you for a moment suspect that the judicial power— ?”

“My dear friend—my good August,” replied Verstork, “a highly placed judicial functionary here in Dutch India once spoke these words: ‘The opium trade lies upon this country as a heavy curse—it has impressed its stamp upon everything, alas, even upon our courts of justice.’ I think I am right, Charles?”

Van Nerekool nodded affirmatively.

“Well,” said van Rheijn, “all that is very sad, a very sad state of things indeed; but the worst of it is that the use of opium makes opium-farming a necessary evil.”

“What nonsense you do talk!” cried Grenits impatiently.

“But Theodoor!”

“But Edward!”—

“If the abuse of opium did not exist, then surely there would at once be an end of opium-farming. You will allow that I think?”

“Oh yes,” replied Grenits, “that sounds very plausible no doubt; but now supposing I were to retort by saying if there were no opium-monopoly then the abuse of the drug would never have assumed its present proportions? That does not perhaps sound so pleasant; but it is a statement which is more easily verified.”

“Oh yes, yes, we heard all about that last night; unfortunately however, the proof was not forthcoming.”

“Well,” said Grenits, “what does history say?”

“History,” replied the other, “what you call history is neither more nor less than the personal opinion and utterance of the historian. One man contends that Europeans brought opium into the country, and another holds a different view—so much for history.”

“But Edward, I hope you do not distrust the Council of India?”

“Well what does the Council say, Theodoor?”

“If my memory serves me, it says this, or words to this effect: ‘The opium monopoly has always been most anxiously watched by the Government as one of the most important sources of public revenue, and every means of enhancing the productiveness of that source of income has been most eagerly adopted.’”

"Aye, aye," returned van Rheijn; "but is all this true?"

"Why," said Grenits, "I hope, Edward, you do not doubt my word?"

"Not in the least, my dear fellow, not in the least. I am quite ready to admit that your quotation is accurate; but was the Council properly informed when it gave that opinion?"

"Well," replied Grenits, "if you go on like that, then we shall not be able to trust anybody or anything. Those people are paid, and most handsomely paid, to get the best and most trustworthy information. But independently altogether of the Council's opinion, in which you seem to have but little faith, tell me, does not the constantly rising revenue from the farming of opium afford proof absolute of the truth of the Council's word? Every successive year the estimate is higher and higher."

"I know that," said van Rheijn, "but estimate and actual produce are widely different things."

"True enough, they are sometimes widely different; but in this particular case they are not. Heaven and earth are moved to reach the figure at which the minister has estimated the revenue, and means the most unfair, even the most criminal, are employed in order, if possible, to surpass the sum at which the revenue has been placed. How many a Netherland's Lion has been given away because, in this district or in that, the produce of the opium contract has exceeded the figure at which the minister put it! How proudly must the 'Virtus Nobilitat' thus earned glitter upon the breast of its possessor!"

"But I want to know," remarked August van Beneden, "is the use of opium really as injurious to the body as men say it is? We saw with our own eyes last night that as far as morality is concerned it has not much to recommend it; but how about its influence upon the material body? We sometimes hear the word poisoning used; that very term indeed was made use of last night, but it seems to me that it is a system of poisoning under which a man may attain to a very good old age, just as a man may grow old who drinks a glass or two of grog."

"Listen to me," said Verstork in a most serious tone. "We are sitting here together, all, I hope, honest trustworthy men I can therefore speak my mind freely and fearlessly before you, and I may without reserve give you the conclusion to which a long and richly varied experience has led me on the subject of opium.

"The habitual use of opium, even in comparatively moderate doses, invariably leads to vitiation of the blood and

constriction of the vessels. This again gives rise to an asthmatic condition and to a permanent and wasting and almost always incurable dysentery. These are accompanied by the most distressing symptoms and intolerable suffering. Upon the opium smoker, moreover, medicines begin gradually to lose their effect, excepting the narcotic poisons in ever increasing quantities. Hence the sufferer is driven to seek relief in augmented doses of the poison, and if he cannot obtain these, his condition becomes utterly unbearable. Yet to this suffering he is doomed, unless he can pass from one fit of intoxication to the other. Opium smoking is the only thing to alleviate the miseries of the collapse which follows an opium debauch, and but few can afford the continual drain of so expensive a remedy. Where a sufficient quantity of good wholesome food is taken, these lamentable results may be slow in showing themselves; and a generous and strengthening diet has preserved many a man, for an entire lifetime, from the most serious consequences of his pernicious habit. But even in these cases, the state of the blood and the general condition of health are so bad, that trifling ailments, such as an ordinary boil or a slight wound, assume a most malignant character and often lead to fatal results; and who can venture to say how many diseases, which depend upon cachexia and which are so common in this country, are caused, or, at all events, are greatly aggravated by the habitual use of opium?

"I spoke just now of a sufficient quantity of nutritive food; but we know too well—and the Government also knows it—that but very few of the natives can afford a supply of food which can be called either sufficient or nutritious. It is well known how exceedingly meagre the diet of the Javanese is, even among those who are in tolerably good circumstances; and it is well known also that, even when he can afford it, he very seldom makes use of food which is really strengthening. And that diet, be it more or less generous, must of necessity become more and more meagre when every day a considerable, and ever more considerable portion of the wages is squandered in the purchase of opium. Thus the enjoyment itself tends to make impossible the only condition under which it might be indulged in with anything like impunity.

"But, you will doubtless object—in such cases lack of money must compel these people to limit themselves to a very moderate consumption, and they will thus be preserved from the fatal effects of excessive indulgence. Such, however, is not always the case. There are men, and their number is by no means small, who in the days of their prosperity have gradually accustomed themselves to a very considerable consumption of the drug; and who, when all their worldly possessions have vanished in clouds of intoxicating smoke, have been compelled either to satisfy themselves with diminished doses of opium or else to abstain from smoking altogether. It is difficult to fathom the hopeless misery of such poor creatures. Further, experience has proved, that very many whose daily consumption is strictly moderate, yet at forty years of age and upwards suffer frightfully from the ill effects of opium, especially of the most painful and incurable dysentery. I myself have at Berbek, at Trengalek, at Santjoemeh, here at Banjoe Pahit and elsewhere, cured a great number of such sufferers with a certain remedy, and thus I have had ample opportunity to make myself personally acquainted with the facts.

"Now, if with these unfortunate creatures we compare the thousands who, at home, drink their couple of glasses of beer or of spirits, then it will appear at a glance how much more pernicious is the use of opium than the use of alcohol. The former indeed, is infinitely more stupefying and deadening, and thus, very much more rapidly than alcohol, it destroys the appetite; so that, even when plenty of wholesome food is at hand, it either cannot be taken at all or else loses much of its nutritive value. Confirmed opium smokers have repeatedly told me that, in consequence of their pernicious habit, they could eat only a few pinches of rice a day, whereas, when, by the help of a remedy with which I supplied them, they were able gradually to diminish their daily dose of opium, they could take ten times the amount of nourishment.

"Then comes another point, and that is the extreme fascination and seductiveness of opium, which causes the most pleasurable bodily sensations, which fills the mind with glorious dreams, which, for a while, removes all pain and suffering, while it, at the same time, deadens much more effectually than strong drink, the mental faculties, in this depressed race already sufficiently dormant, and thus the use of opium holds its victim much more securely bound in the fetters of his fatal passion, than the moderate use of alcohol enslaves anyone at home.

"Having thus, by degrees, come to the influence of opium upon the mind and the character, I must certainly not omit to draw your attention to the selfishness and self-indulgence which it develops in the smoker; to the ever-growing indifference to all his surroundings, even to his own wife and children; to the listless indolence and aversion to work, to care, to trouble in fact of any kind, which at length, by night or day, allows him to think of nothing but of his master-passion and all its concomitant cravings, to the gratification of which everything must be sacrificed, and everybody must become subservient. A gin drinker, for the indulgence in his ignoble passion, demands no other service than that now and then someone is sent out to fetch him his dram; but the opium smoker, if he can afford the luxury of attendance at all, monopolises the services of his entire household. One must work hard to earn the means of satisfying his expensive craving, another must go and purchase his opium, a third must stand by in readiness to fill his pipe, a fourth must prepare his coffee and the other refreshments he requires. It is true, no doubt, that he is not so violent and not so noisy in his debauch as one who is under the influence of liquor; but, when the effects of the narcotic begin to wear off and his pains and ailments again begin to make themselves felt, then, unless the whole family is at his beck and call and ready once more to minister to his passion, he fills the house with invectives and threatening—then he utters moanings and lamentations most pitiful and heartrending. If to this we add the bodily and mental debility which the opium slave transmits as a legacy to his wretched offspring, though the majority of smokers cease at an early age to have children at all, then we cannot help wondering what kind of miserable stunted race will be the second or third generation from the present one.

"And then," continued Verstork, after a pause, "and then the poverty and destitution which the use of opium entails! What an amount of prosperity and welfare has already been,—and is daily being—swallowed up by the use of that baneful drug! Among the lower classes, an opium smoker, even though he smokes in strict moderation, very soon arrives at the point when he must devote his entire earnings to the purchase of the drug, while at the same time his craving for refreshing and stimulating dainties must likewise be satisfied. The families are legion in which the wife, assisted perhaps by one or two of her children, is the only breadwinner. Should she happen to be in delicate health, should she be disabled by sickness or childbed, why then the misery of such a household is unfathomable. And, believe me, such cases of extreme misery are much more frequent out here than similar cases of destitution in Europe occasioned by the abuse of drink.

"Now all these powers, bodily, mental, and moral; and all that prosperity, which at present opium saps and destroys, might be devoted to industry and agriculture. If such use were made of them, how much greater would be both production and consumption, and how much more considerable would be the profit to the exchequer—a profit earned in a fair and legitimate way—than any revenue which the accursed system of opium farming can produce! Thousands upon thousands of the natives here have neither the energy, nor the means, nor the inclination to work or to learn how they may profitably cultivate their gardens and fields, neither do they care to progress in any branch of industry whatever; because they have offered up—and are continually offering—all they possess in the world to opium. But, are not industry and agriculture the very life-blood of a State? Yet here, the state itself does all it possibly can to poison that life-blood, and thus to bring about its own destruction."

William Verstork here paused for awhile, after so long an oration, he felt the necessity of quenching his thirst with a glass of beer. All his guests sat silently waiting for what he might further have to say. His words had evidently made a very deep impression upon his hearers, for the language to which they had listened was the simple and unvarnished tale of actual experience; and, however young and heedless some of them might be, yet the speech of their friend had awakened their interest, and had gone straight to their hearts. At length, after having drawn a long breath, the Controller went on to say:

"You know, my friends, that my official career has not been passed entirely at Santjoemeh. My probationary time I spent in the capital of the Kediri residence. As second-class controller I was some time at Berbek and at Trenggalek. I know, therefore, from personal experience how matters stand in those residencies also. Now listen to me. Kediri has a population of about 700,000 souls—the vast majority of them very poor people. In that place the opium contract produces eighteen hundred thousand guilders. If to that sum we add the price paid for the drug delivered to the farmer, and the profits which he makes on the sale then, I think, we shall be well within the mark if we put down two and a half millions of guilders as the sum which those poor people, of their own free will, pay annually to purchase a few hours a day of enjoyment and oblivion. I say nothing now about the cost of smuggled opium; the amount paid for it is not known, and every one must, therefore, form his own opinion of that. How is it possible for a population so poor to find so large a sum of money, in addition, mind you, to all their other burdens, such as compulsory labour, salt-tax, rent, licenses, import duties, &c.? That is a mystery to me—but then you should see what kind of a life is that of a poor Javanese family.

"Their house is generally very small, built of bamboo and covered with straw. Furniture they have none whatever; a mat spread out on a bamboo bench, and a coarse pillow is what they sleep on. They cook their food on the ground in pots and pans of the commonest earthenware; they eat it on pisang leaves with their fingers; they drink water out of an earthenware pitcher. They seldom, we may say never, wash their clothes which, such as they are, they continue to wear until they fall in rags from their bodies. The children run about naked, and grow up in the mud among the bullocks. At five o'clock in the morning they rise and go to work so as to be present in time for roll-call at six. They work for their masters, in the rice-fields, at road-making, in the coffee plantations, or in the osier-beds. Should a man get a day off, he may go and work on his own account, and then he can earn about 40 or 50 cents (10 pence) for ten hours' labour. When they get home in the evening, they have their morsel of food and fully half the day's earning is spent on opium. At eight o'clock all are fast asleep, and up to eight o'clock the only lamp they have in the hut is a saucer with a cotton wick in a little stinking oil. Such is the faithful picture of the daily life of a Javanese opium smoker. Nothing—absolutely nothing to make the slightest break in this weary monotony. Nothing but work, hard work; mostly for insufficient wages, very frequently compulsory labour for no wages at all. And then, behind their backs to be called a pack of lazy scoundrels! That is a little too bad. Tell me, have we Dutch any feeling at all for our fellow-creatures? Is it not at length high time that all that compulsory and unpaid labour should be done away with and that the opium-curse should be banished from the land? Every right-minded Dutchman ought to do his best according to the utmost of his power to attain that end, because every Dutchman is personally and individually responsible for so frightful a state of things, and every Dutchman ought to be heartily ashamed of himself while the poor patient Javanese are being so shamefully imposed upon. All that the poor native can earn either by his work for his masters or in his own free time, he must, in one shape or other, offer up to that insatiable Moloch, the public treasury. There is but one thing left for him, and that is a little rice; and of that he has not enough to last him for the whole year."

"Yes," observed Grenits, when Verstork had finished speaking, "yes, William, you are perfectly right, and that is the reason why he seeks for consolation and temporary oblivion in the opium den, just as in Holland a poor man in similar circumstances flies for relief to the bottle. Thus cause and effect act and react upon one another; misery suggests opium or drink, and drink and opium in their turn engender misery. It requires a very powerful effort of the will to shake off either bad habit, and drink and opium are the very things which deprive a man of whatever power of will he may have. Therefore it is perfectly hopeless to expect the people to take the initiative in any such reforms as Verstork has mentioned; the evil keeps on spreading and is daily striking deeper roots. The ruling power ought to exercise its authority and drag these poor degraded people out of the slough of despond in which so many of them are wallowing. It ought to do this, I say, regardless of cost and trouble; and regardless also of the pain it may for the moment inflict. Every right-minded citizen ought, according as he is able, to assist the government in that arduous task, and whoever would, for selfish motives, strive to retard or to frustrate this plan of rescue ought at once to be put aside and rendered harmless. If Holland and Dutch India cannot continue to exist, or to speak more correctly, cannot continue to pay their way without screwing a revenue out of such immoral sources as abuse of opium, abuse of drink and unpaid compulsory labour—why then for honour of the country it were better that it should do like the man who is no longer able to maintain, by honest means, a separate home of his own, and go and live as a boarder in the house of another."

For a few moments all sat silent. They all felt the truth, the undeniable truth of Theodoor's words, though his concluding sentence had most deeply wounded their patriotic pride. At length van Beneden started up from his seat, and going up to Verstork he took his hand and pressed it cordially.

"I thank you," said he in a tone of deep emotion, "I thank you heartily for the insight you have given me into the fatal effects of opium. I am but a young lawyer and have, as yet, had no opportunity of appearing as counsel in any case connected with the traffic. I have read much about the abuse of the drug, and I learned much last night under the Wariengien tree on the green at Kaligaweh; but your manly and vigorous words have awakened my conscience, and here, in the presence of you all, I solemnly promise that I will, on the very first opportunity that may present itself, make the very best use I can of what your experience has taught me."

"Hurrah!" cried Leendert Grashuis. "William, your excellent speech has thus had not only a practical, but it will have an immediate effect. Aye, my friends, I say an immediate effect; for I have a proposition to make to you—"

"Out with it!" they cried, "let us hear it."

"Yesterday, we all but witnessed the Amokh which took place at Kaligaweh; this morning we were within a few minutes of witnessing another and no less terrible crime. It is not my intention to analyse the feelings to which these scenes have given rise in our hearts—the father a manslayer, and the daughter dishonoured. Both these events, however, are intimately and immediately connected with the infamous system of opium-farming. We have heard the testimony of our superior officer. In the name of all assembled here, I thank him for his noble sentiments; and now my friends let us not be behind him in generosity. Dalima and her father must have an advocate in the trial which awaits them, and that advocate we have found. Both the accused parties will, in our friend August van Beneden, find a defender who will take up their cause with zeal and ability. Methinks, I can hear his maiden speech—it will be a splendid one."

"Thank you, Leendert," said van Beneden with much emotion, "I can assure my friends that they have not misjudged me."

"Aye, aye," continued Grashuis, "I know that well; but we all of us intend to participate in the good work, do we not?"

"By all means!" was the general cry.

"Well then, listen to me, for now I come to the proposal I have to make. In this case there can be no question of offering our friend van Beneden any honorarium—that would deprive his labour of love of its chief merit. But in carrying on this defence many expenses will necessarily be incurred and many fees will have to be paid in advance. We all know that Dame Justice is in India an expensive—a most expensive hussy. Well then, let us all join hands and undertake to find the funds that may be required—then August will be able to carry on both cases in the most effectual and vigorous manner."

"Agreed, agreed!" they all exclaimed. "Now, August, do your best!"

"Now that we have arranged that business," resumed Grenits, "I have a question to put to our host."

"By all means, Theodoor," said Verstork, "what is it?"

"I am a merchant," said Grenits, "and as such, I am bound to be very inquisitive. In trade I not only need all the information I can obtain about any article of commerce; but I find a little chemistry uncommonly useful—"

"Come to the point," cried several of the guests; "we don't want any lectures on chemistry and commerce!"

But Grenits, without paying any heed to the interruption, went on: "Just now in your speech you made mention of a certain remedy which I think you said you found useful in curing some unhappy slaves to opium. Is that, may I ask, a secret remedy?"

"A secret remedy?" asked Verstork, with a laugh. "What do you mean—do you take me for a quack-doctor?"

"Not by any means," replied Grenits. "Since this remedy then is not a secret one, will you tell me what it is?"

"With pleasure," said Verstork; "they are pills which were given me by a missionary. They are composed of opium and radix rhei or rhubarb, in the following proportions: Twelve of these pills contain three grains of opium and twelve grains of rhubarb. They are to be administered every five days; the first time twelve have to be taken, the next time nine, the third time six, but it is very seldom indeed that the third dose is required, for by that time the patients are generally cured."

"And," persisted Grenits, "can you actually vouch for their efficacy?"

"To be sure I can," replied Verstork. "In my study you will find a kind of trophy consisting of a dozen bedoedans or opium-pipes which the smokers have deposited with me with the solemn promise that they would never touch the pipe again. The missionary who gave me the pills can speak most positively of upwards of seventy cures."

"Now," asked Grenits, "you will not be offended if I give you a bit of advice in your own interest and in the interest also of the missionary?"

"Certainly not," said Verstork, "let us hear it, by all means."

"Well, my advice is this: keep that prescription strictly to yourself and don't say a word about it to anybody. The colonial secretary who has but one object in view, and that is, to raise the opium revenue as much as possible, might look upon your remedy as an attack made upon the golden calf; and missionaries have before this been impeded in their Gospel work, and men have been expelled from the colonies, and official functionaries have been suspended or pensioned off for the commission of much more venial offences than bringing such pills as yours to the opium-smoker."

Verstork turned slightly pale as he heard his friend's well-meant advice. For a single moment his thoughts flew to those dear ones who so greatly needed his assistance and support. Did he repent of having thus honestly spoken his mind? Who can say!—He put his hand to his forehead as if to wipe away some unpleasant reflection. "Oh," said he, "it is not quite so bad as that, I hope."

"Perhaps not," said Grenits, with a smile, "but your pills will not earn you the Netherlands' Lion."

"That may be," said the Controller, "however, *Fais ce que dois, advienne que pourra*, that is my motto. For all that I shall not give the poor souls one pill the less."

Then, allowing his eye to wander over the table which by this time had been pretty well cleared, for our friends had sat down to dinner as hungry as hunters, he continued—

"My friends, our dinner is over. After yesterday's jaunt and this morning's exertion, and after the very short rest we had last night, you must all need repose. My servants will show you to your rooms. I am going to work and, as I told you just now, this evening I am off with you to Santjoemeh. I wish you all a pleasant siesta.

A few minutes later the pandoppo was deserted and towards evening the five friends were galloping along the road to the capital.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN THE RESIDENT'S OFFICE.

VERSTORK was much too late.

After the scene in the hut near the Djoerang Pringapoes, he ought at once to have jumped into the saddle and there and then have galloped off to Santjoemeh; thus he might possibly have succeeded in warding off the storm that was gathering over his head. As it was, he had allowed another to forestall him. It was not long before he found that out.

"So!—that is your report of what has taken place!" said van Gulpendam, in the most offensive and sneering tone imaginable, when the Controller at length, after having long been kept waiting and after having times out of number paced up and down the front-gallery, had been admitted into the presence of his chief.

"So—that is your report is it? It seems to me you have taken your time about it! Yesterday, before noon, the information had already reached me. A pleasant dinner time for me when such things are occurring in my residency. But the gentlemen, it seems, were amusing themselves with hunting. Oh, yes! anything may be going on in their district, then they see nothing, they hear nothing!"

"But, Resident—" Verstork ventured to say.

"Hold your tongue, sir," cried van Gulpendam, savagely, "I have asked you no question, when I do it will be time enough to answer, and then, I suspect, you will have no reply to make."

Verstork was standing there, in the office of his superior officer, pale as death and unnerved and biting his lips with suppressed rage.

"I cannot say, Mr. Verstork, that you have clapped on too much sail—you have been somewhat slow in making me acquainted with these painful events."

"Resident, I—"

"I did not put any question," again roared van Gulpendam, with a look of scorn and contempt upon his subordinate, "please hold your tongue!"

"It appeared to me, Resident, that—"

"Be silent, I say! I only have a right to speak—"

Verstork, however, took no heed of this rude interruption, and quietly went on: "—That you made some remarks about the time of my presenting my report. If that be so, I feel it my duty, nay my right, to exculpate myself."

"If you will not keep silence," shouted van Gulpendam, "I will call—" he was on the point of making a mistake, he was just going to say the boatswain's mate; but he checked himself and said, "I will call my chief constable and have you removed out of my presence."

"Hark you, Mr. van Gulpendam," said Verstork drawing himself up to his full height, and speaking with much dignity, "Hark you, I am neither your corporal nor your boatswain of the watch. And, further, let me tell you that if you continue to address me in such terms I will lodge a complaint against you with the Secretary for the Home Department, or better still, with the Governor General!"

It was now van Gulpendam's turn to change colour, he saw that he had gone a little too far. He had so long been accustomed to see every one bowing down before him and putting up with all his whims and fits of bad temper, that he never thought of checking himself in the presence of Verstork, whom he had always looked upon as an easy-going and good-tempered fellow. He now, however, at once drew in his horns and said in a very different tone:

"Pardon me, Mr. Verstork, you know I am of a sanguine temperament. I am, moreover, very much vexed at not receiving this news from one of my officers in the first instance. Come, take a seat, I should like to run my eye over this report."

The Controller sat down, while the resident at his desk turned his back to the light and began reading the document. Outside the office, a couple of police oppassers were pacing up and down, attracted, no doubt, to the spot by the high tone of voice in which the conversation had been carried on. In a moment or two van Gulpendam again broke out—"I thought as much—I had been warned of this—" But, checking himself, he said no more, and went on reading.

"Resident," said Verstork, "may I beg leave to inquire against what you have been warned?"

Van Gulpendam looked up over the sheet of paper he held in his hand, and fixing his eye on the controller's face which was turned to the light, he said, with an assumed air of dignity:

"Mr. Verstork, you really ought to try and cure yourself of the bad habit you seem to have contracted of interrogating your superiors. Believe me that kind of thing makes a very bad impression. I do not mind telling you what warning I have received, not, mind you, because you demand the information; but because I consider it only fair that you should know. It will probably bring you to the conclusion that you had better take back this report and modify it altogether."

"Modify my report, Resident?" exclaimed Verstork; but, without noticing the interruption, van Gulpendam continued:

"I have been informed that you intend to represent matters in such a light as to make it appear that a successful attempt has been made on the honour of this Javanese girl.

"But, Resident," said Verstork, very gravely, "this question concerns a person who is in your service, who is the baboe—I may almost say—the companion, of your own daughter."

"And who, as such," said van Gulpendam, interrupting him, "ought to be a person of unblemished character. I quite agree with you there. Unfortunately, she is nothing of the kind. Only a few days ago she was roaming about outside the house for the whole night, and then came in with a long rigmarole about a forcible abduction of which she pretended to have been the victim. Now again, for the second time, she is out at night, and this time she is found in the possession of opium. She is the daughter of a smuggler—you know that as well as I do, seeing that on Saturday last there was a murder committed in her father's house, of which, luckily, you sent me timely notice. She is engaged to be married to another opium smuggler; and now it has been proved that she is a smuggler herself. At present she is safe under lock and key, and I am glad of it, as it will spare me the trouble of driving the brazen-faced slut out of my premises."

"But, Resident," resumed Verstork, as soon as his chief paused for a moment to take breath, "when we came running up to her cries for help, she was naked, bleeding, her hair dishevelled. Everything in fact pointed to—"

"A desperate resistance to the police," broke in van Gulpendam. "I know all about that. Did you examine her?"

"No, I did not."

"Very well, that examination I have ordered the medical authorities to hold, and see there," continued the Resident, as he looked out of the window, "why, unless I am mistaken, that is the carriage of the chief medical officer now stopping at the gate! We shall soon get to the bottom of this business."

Almost immediately after this the chief constable came in to announce the arrival of the Surgeon General. The latter advanced to the Resident's chair, shook hands very ceremoniously, and then went through the same process, but much more familiarly, with the Controller.

"Ha, Verstork—you here?" he said.

Before, however, the Controller had time to reply, the Resident, turning to the doctor, said:

"Take a seat, doctor—well?—"

"No question of any such thing, Resident!"

"Indeed—now did I not tell you so? But the girl was wounded they told me."

"A few scratches of no importance whatever—mere trifling skin-wounds and a little blood!"

"There was therefore no stu—stu—what did you call it?"

"*Stuprum violentum*—Oh, no, no! nothing of the kind. Here is the formal certificate properly filled in—that will be sufficient to satisfy all objections."

"Thank you, doctor—much obliged to you."

"Now, Resident, I must beg you to excuse me. I must be off at once as I have a number of visits to pay. Good-bye, sir—good-bye, Verstork."

"No excuse required, doctor," said van Gulpendam, "don't let me detain you; good-morning!"

As soon as the medical officer had disappeared van Gulpendam turned to Verstork and said:

"You heard that—didn't you, Mr. Verstork?"

"Oh, yes, I heard it; but my conviction is not the least shaken."

"It is not?"

"No, Resident."

"Well, for all that," said van Gulpendam, airily, "I advise you to heave to."

"To heave to? I don't understand you," said Verstork, though all the time he understood perfectly.

"I will express my meaning in plainer terms," returned van Gulpendam, very deliberately, "I advise you, as I have done already, to take back this report and to modify it."

"Why should I do so, Resident? Why do you give me that advice?"

"Because, in the first place, the facts mentioned in it are twisted, exaggerated, and represented from a prejudiced and partial point of view."

"Resident!" interrupted Verstork.

But without heeding him van Gulpendam went on:

"In fact that paper reads like a sensational report, which evidently is aimed at attaining some ultimate object. And then again there occur in it passages which most certainly will be highly displeasing to the Government. Here, for instance, is one of them:"

The Resident turned over the leaves of the document, and seemed to be looking for a certain passage; having found it he read as follows:

"Allow me also to state that my official career of twelve years has taught me that the opium-monopoly is an *imperium in imperio;* that in order to promote the opium-trade everything the people loves and honours is trampled upon and trodden under foot. The opium-farmer does not trouble himself in the least about police regulations or about penal statutes, his satellites simply enter people's houses and violate the right of domicile; his spies and his policemen—at all events the police which he has in his pay—have no scruples whatever, and pay no respect to anything. A European would make himself liable to severe punishment were he to treat the natives in the manner in which the refuse of mankind, if only they are in the opium-farmer's employ, dares to treat them. These opium-agents have respect neither for the husband, the wife, nor the daughter. In the houses, aye even on the public roads, they strip them, they search them in the most disgusting manner, and never trouble themselves about any protest at all. These scoundrels, sheltering themselves under the impunity which the opium monopoly casts over them, inflict upon the natives the most horrible insults frequently to satisfy their own passions, sometimes merely for the purpose of revenge. A sad proof of this is the treatment to which the Javanese girl, Dalima, has been subjected."

The Resident paused here for an instant and fixed a penetrating glance upon his subordinate; but the latter as steadily returned his gaze.

"You see," he continued, "when I read such rant as that, then I am forced to suspect"—and here the high functionary significantly tapped his forehead with his finger—"that there is something wrong with you here!"

"Resident!" exclaimed Verstork, "you are forgetting yourself!"

"Not at all, my dear sir, for by writing thus, what do you in fact tell me, in so many words? What but this: that in your districts these domiciliary visits and these searches on the high roads are necessary to prevent the illegal sale of opium. You know, even better than I do, that quite lately there have in your districts been several very ugly revelations. I have only to call to your mind the capture at Moeara Tjatjing, the capture at Kaligaweh in the house of Pak Ardjan, and now again smuggled opium is found with Setrosmito and with his daughter Dalima. Suspicions may perhaps have arisen in my mind that Banjoe Pahit is a hot-bed of smuggling; but now your most intemperate language confirms my worst fears."

"Resident!" cried Verstork no longer able to contain himself, "however great is the respect which I am bound to feel for your mature judgment, yet I cannot allow these words of yours to pass without protesting against them. For, in the first place, you insinuate that I have been guilty of neglect of duty with regard to the opium-traffic, and, in the next, you suggest that this neglect of duty on my part has made Banjoe Pahit a hot-bed of the smuggling-trade. I am, however, perfectly well acquainted with the duties which the Order of 1867 imposes upon me, and, allow me to assure you, I am too conscientious to neglect those duties."

"My dear Mr. Verstork, I did not intend——" interrupted van Gulpendam.

"Give me leave to continue," resumed Verstork; "I have been attacked, I now defend myself against your imputations, it is my duty to do so, and I claim it as my right. I positively and utterly deny that Banjoe Pahit is a hot-bed of smuggling."

"Do you intend to tell me then," cried van Gulpendam, "that no smuggling is carried on there?"

"I do nothing of the kind, Resident," replied Verstork, "were I to do so that would be saying what I know to be untrue. My district lies right along the open and everywhere accessible coast of the Java sea. The laws which control the illegal traffic in opium are, as you are aware, wholly insufficient; and, even such as they are, we have not the power to carry out the laws effectually. No wonder then that the smugglers—and, as you know, the opium-farmers themselves are the chief offenders—no wonder, I say, that the smugglers make the most of this lax state of things. It stands to reason that it should be so; but if you compare the illegal trade which goes on at Banjoe Pahit with the smuggling in the adjoining districts which lie along the same sea-coast, then I maintain that you will find that my district, far from being as you would have it, a hot-bed of smuggling, contrasts, in that respect, very favourably with the others. Now, as regards the cases to which you have twice alluded, I, as controller of the district, have very carefully investigated them; and I now give it you as my deliberate opinion that the opium discovered at Moeara Tjatjing was put on shore by the boats of the schooner brig Kiem Ping Hin, a vessel which, you know, does not stand in the odour of sanctity; whilst the other two concern but very minute quantities of the drug which assuredly would never have been found at all, had the bandoelans been previously themselves well searched."

"That is all very fine, Mr. Verstork," replied van Gulpendam, "but for the present it carries us too much into detail. To come to the point, however, I now again repeat my friendly advice, go about, go about, and take back this report."

William Verstork sat there pale as death. For a moment he covered his eyes with his hands as if he would exclude some painful vision, and he reflected. The thought of his mother, of his sisters and brothers, came up vividly before him, and ran like a red-hot iron through his brain. He fully grasped the purport of the advice he had heard. He knew perfectly well that it was not only a counsel, but also a threat, a threat moreover from an all-powerful superior to a helpless subordinate. For one moment—to his honour be it said, it was but for one moment—he hesitated; then his strong natural sense of duty resumed its sway.

"Resident," said he in a gentle and low, but yet in a perfectly steady voice, "what would be your opinion of me if I were to give way and follow your counsel? What would you think of me if I were to take back my report? I say nothing now of the violence which I thus would be doing to my sense of common honesty."

"Sirrr!" roared van Gulpendam in a passion.

"Would you not, in that case, consider me wholly unfit for the position which I at present occupy; would you not feel the deepest contempt for my character, and would not your sense of duty urge you at once to request me to retire from my country's service? At any rate, I know that you could never again, from that moment, place the slightest confidence in me. Is not that true? And yet the position I occupy imperatively demands that I should enjoy the fullest confidence of my superior officer."

Mr. van Gulpendam had by this time recovered his temper, he could not help feeling the force of Verstork's words.

"You take the whole business," said he in his most conciliatory manner, "much too seriously. Now, just see how I look upon it. Yesterday you gentlemen had a most fatiguing day's hunting. I make no doubt that now and then the pocket-flask was appealed to—of course it was, and very naturally too. After the hunt was over, a jolly sociable dinner, at which strong, heady Haantjes beer and heavy Baour wine—perhaps even generous champagne circulated pretty freely. No harm in that, all that is the most natural thing in the world. Amongst young people one could expect nothing else. Well—in that happy frame of mind you sat down to write your report—that is how I look upon it."

"Indeed, Resident," replied Verstork, "that report of mine then seems to have made no impression upon you, than that either I was not right in the head, or that I wrote it under the influence of liquor?"

"Mr. Verstork, my dear sir, you have such a queer way of blurting out things. Believe me, I have but one object in view, and that is to prevent you—in your own interest mind you—to commit an act of folly. It is for you to say whether you are prepared to withdraw this report—yes or no. To this I have but a single word to add, and that is: that your entire career depends upon your present decision."

Verstork heaved a deep sigh. He saw only too clearly that, in whatever way he might decide to act, his position was an exceedingly difficult one. But for all that he would not retrace one step on the straight path upon which he had entered, which he knew was the path of truth and honour, and very quietly, but very firmly he said:

"Resident, my decision is taken. Come what will, I refuse to take back my report."

"Is that your final decision?"

"It is, Resident."

"Now think it well over—is that your last word?"

"Resident, it is."

"Be it so," said van Gulpendam with apparent resignation, "you will have no one but yourself to blame for the consequences."

"I am prepared to meet the consequences, Resident."

"Very well, in that case I shall have to send up the paper in its present state to the Governor General—the matter will then be in his hands."

Verstork was preparing to rise and take his leave, thinking that the painful interview was at an end.

"One moment please, Mr. Verstork," said the Resident. "Just sit down for another few minutes—I have another account to settle with you."

"What is that, Resident?" asked the Controller.

"Yesterday morning a highly respected inhabitant of the island was publicly insulted and even suffered personal violence, merely because, at your bidding, he bore testimony to the truth. That abuse and that ill-treatment he suffered in your presence and you did not, so far as I am aware, exercise your authority either to prevent it or to put a stop to it."

"It was all the work of an instant," replied Verstork; "the words were uttered and the blows were dealt so suddenly and so unexpectedly, that no one—not even you—had you been present—could have interposed. I can assure you that had there been the slightest fear of the offence being repeated, I would have stepped in to prevent it."

"I know nothing about all that," said van Gulpendam coldly. "I only know that abusive words were uttered and blows were dealt, while you, the superior officer, stood by. That is how the matter stands. Now if I could only have suggested to the authorities that our young hunters were in a state of excitement and that the action was merely one of youthful indiscretion."

"No, Resident, not so," exclaimed Verstork, "not at all—not at least under the influence of that particular kind of excitement which you were kind enough to suggest just now."

"It was done therefore in cold blood! I am obliged, Mr. Verstork, to take notice of that fact; you see even if I were disposed to be lenient, your own words deprive me of the power of hushing the matter up. All this, I fear, is not much in your favour, sir, and your friend, who seems so ready with his fists, will thank you no doubt for your testimony to his sobriety."

"My friend!" cried Verstork, "what has he got to do with all this?"

"What has he got to do with it? Why he will find that out soon enough I fear. I have here lying before me a formal accusation, which I hoped I might be able quietly to shelve and say no more about; but now, I must forward it to the authorities. You see, Mr. Verstork, you might have avoided all this unpleasantness."

"Ah, Resident," replied Verstork very bitterly, "I begin to see that Mr. Mokesuep has not allowed the grass to grow under his feet. Be all that, however, as it may. If you think that this trifling occurrence must be followed up—very well then, let the law have its course! I shall be the very first to appear as a witness."

The Resident uttered a strange short laugh; but made no reply.

Verstork rose from his seat.

"Have you any further orders, sir?" he said with a formal bow.

"None at present, Mr. Verstork."

"Then I beg to wish you a very good morning."

A slight nod from the Resident, who still kept his seat at his desk, was the only reply to his greeting.

The next moment Verstork was walking down the steps of the mansion muttering to himself as he went, "Poor mother, poor sisters!"

"Stupid ass," said van Gulpendam to himself. "Yes, an arrant fool indeed! Now that that booby wont come to terms the business will require a little more piloting. Never mind, I have friends in Batavia who know how to get such questions safe into harbour; men who knew how to make General van der Heijden disappear, and who will not think much of this little job. Forward! is the word—at the end of it all there is the 'Virtus Nobilitat.'"

A short time after, Verstork sat down to dinner with his friend van Nerekool. The latter was the only one at home since van Rheijn had sent word that pressing business would keep him at the office and that he could therefore not be in to dinner. The two friends were discussing the events of the former day and the result also of the morning's interview with the Resident. The Controller was so utterly downcast and disheartened, that Van Nerekool, who himself was not in the best of spirits, yet felt that he must try and cheer him up and put some courage into him.

"Come, William, old fellow," he said, "don't hang your head so sadly. You would almost make me think that you repent of the course of action you have taken."

"Repent, Charles," cried the other, very sadly and yet without a sign of hesitation. "Repent? no never, if it were all to do again I would, in every respect, act as I have done. But, my poor mother, my poor sisters!"

"Don't look at things so darkly," said van Nerekool.

"So darkly did you say? Why—the very best thing that can happen is that I shall be transferred to some other place—that I shall be torn out of the sphere of work to which here I have become accustomed."

"Well," said Charles, "and suppose that should happen?"

"Why, that in itself is already a grave misfortune; you know how expensive moving is in India. Then comes the question, where shall I be sent to? You do not suppose that they will give me a lucrative place. For years and years I shall have to face very serious pecuniary difficulties and, meanwhile, it will be impossible for me to do for my dear family that which it has now so long been my pleasure to do."

"Come, come," replied Charles van Nerekool, "cheer up! Even if it comes to the worst, some remedy will be found for that at least—I can promise you so much at least."

"But, my dear Charles—that is the smallest misfortune that can happen to me. Every other possibility is simply terrible. Just think—what if they dismissed me from the service altogether?"

"Now," said Charles, "you are exaggerating. What in the world have you done to deserve dismissal! On the contrary, you have secured for yourself the esteem and admiration of every honest man."

"Honest man!" said Verstork bitterly, "oh you don't know with whom I have to deal!"

Van Nerekool's face twitched painfully—he had learned to know something of the man with whom his friend had come into collision.

"But," continued he as cheerfully as he could, "but can we not think of some means of warding off the blow? Can we not manage to avoid even the least of these misfortunes?"

"Aye," cried Verstork, "that is the very thing I have been cudgelling my brains about?"

"Have you any friends at Batavia," asked van Nerekool, "do you know any one there?"

"Friends? yes, I know one man, a certain Mr. Reijnaals."

"What? Reijnaals—the son-in-law of the member of the Indian Council?"

"Yes, that is the man."

"Why then he is your man. Come cheer up and let us now together sit down and draw up an accurate account of all that has taken place. That account you will send to Reijnaals. And I also have friends in Batavia who, I think, have some influence. I will write to them. Come let us set to work and begin our battle fearlessly—it is no good moping." So the two friends sat down to their task and when, very late in the afternoon, Edward van Rheijn came home from his office, two letters almost as bulky as parcels, had been sent off by the mail. Van Rheijn looked weary and care-worn.

"You are very late," said van Nerekool—"have you been very busy?"

"Yes, very busy," was the brief reply. "I am tired out and am going to lie down a bit."

"Anything particular?"

"No, nothing very particular; but plenty of work."

"What about?" asked van Nerekool.

"Excuse me," replied van Rheijn putting his fingers to his lips, "they are office-secrets which I am not at liberty to reveal."

With these words he involuntarily cast a pitying look on William Verstork.

CHAPTER XXII.

A SALE AT BANJOE PAHIT.

On a Saturday evening, about a fortnight after, a great number of young people were assembled in the open air at the round table before the verandah of Concordia, the club at Santjoemeh. It was a gala-night and consequently all the élite of Santjoemeh had turned out. The gentlemen were for the most part inside the club-house, or strolling about within the grounds, the ladies, either on foot or reclining in elegant carriages, were promenading and enjoying the splendid evening which the full moon, at nine o'clock high up in the heavens, rendered still more delightful, and listening to the excellent music of the band.

Within the club-house were seated some elderly ladies and gentlemen, gravely and solemnly playing a game at cards; the young people lounged in the front gallery, while the gayer and more restless spirits among them sought the open air and were, as we said above, grouped round the table in front of the outer gallery. There they found themselves in full view of the ladies whose glances they were glad to receive and ready to repay with interest.

"Look yonder," cried one of this group, "there goes pretty little Celine with her mother and her aunt!"

"Yes," replied another, "and Hermance on horseback; I think her a much prettier girl."

"I say, look out! there comes the Resident's carriage."

"Aye, I see with fair Laurentia. She is no doubt coming to take a hand. Just look how attentive van Rheijn is to her.

Quite the gallant—he is helping her down—now he offers his arm!"

"Of course! the njonja of Kandjeng toean Resident!"

"You may say what you like but she is a monstrous fine woman—I envy that fellow Edward!"

"I grant you—she is a splendid woman—but she is not a patch upon her daughter."

"You are right there," cried another. "By the way where can nonna Anna have got to? One sees her nowhere now."

"I am told she is gone on a visit to a friend—they say to spend a few weeks with the wife of the Assistant Resident of Karang Anjer."

"What Karang Anjer in Bagelen? That is a deuce of a way off! Is there anything wrong with her?"

"Why, don't you know? Van Nerekool has proposed and been refused—and it appears that until Charles can get some other appointment elsewhere, the Resident wants to keep his daughter out of the way."

"What do you say?" asked another, "Charles van Nerekool going away—what in the world is that for?"

Just then Grenits, who had been sitting some time in the reading-room of the Club, came up to the group of young men with a newspaper in his hand.

"Good evening, Theodoor!" was the general cry; for the young merchant was very much liked by all, and exceedingly popular among the members. "Have you got any news that you are walking about with the Santjoemeh Herald?"

"Listen to me, gentlemen," said Grenits as he slowly unfolded his paper and began to read:

"'Messrs. Gladbach and Co., will sell by public auction on Monday the 24th inst., the whole of the Furniture and Effects belonging to William Verstork, Esq., Controller at Banjoe Pahit. The principal items include: seats, rocking and easy chairs, tables, marble-topped consoles, mirrors, paintings, lamps of all descriptions, terra-cotta statuettes, awnings, screens, bedsteads and bedroom furniture complete—wash-stands, wardrobes, linen-presses, cupboards, kitchen and stable furniture—all in excellent preservation and as good as new. Further a splendid collection of plants such as roses, crotons, ferns, &c., in pots and ornamental tubs. One Bengal cow with calf in full milk, a considerable quantity of poultry; turkeys, geese, ducks, fowls and pigeons. Several carriages all nearly new—a well-trained saddle horse, a pair of iron-grey carriage horses, a pair ditto, black Battakkers. Messrs. Gladbach & Co. are prepared to supply full particulars, catalogues and conditions of sale. Nota Bene. On Monday next from 7.30 to 8.30 carriages will start from the green at Santjoemeh to convey intending purchasers to and from Banjoe Pahit free of cost.'"

As Grenits concluded, his hearers looked at one another in some surprise.

"Come, that's not a bad idea," said one, "that free conveyance is a capital dodge."

"Verstork going to leave!" cried another. "Where is he off to—it seems he is going to sell even his saddle-horse."

"He is going to Atjeh," replied Grenits. "He won't want a horse there."

"To Atjeh! why that is impossible," cried another, "the army is in charge there, there can be no vacancy in that place for a civilian like Verstork!"

"I know nothing at all about it—I can only tell you what William has told me. But, in order that no mistake may arise, allow me to tell you gentlemen that my friend Verstork knows nothing whatever about the free conveyances to Banjoe Pahit, that is entirely my doing, about which I have not consulted him. I alone am responsible for that addition to the advertisement."

"I see," laughed one of the company, "you do not want the thing to hang fire."

"Very likely not," said Grenits coolly.

"But," asked anothe [illegible]y is Verstork to be removed, and to Atjeh, of all places in the world?"

Grenits shrugged his shoulders but made no reply.

"Why, don't you know?" cried another, "it is all about that affair with Lim Ho! You have heard of the story of Lim Ho and the pretty baboe Dalima?"

"Aye—I know now—when Lim Ho so nobly resisted temptation—at least so says our Surgeon-major."

"Yes," added another voice, "an [illegible] when our friend Grenits boxed somebody's ears."

"Ah, yes—Muizenkop did catch [illegible]—I say what has come of that business?"

"He has brought an action against me," shortly replied Grenits.

"Has he? The brute! But how do you know that, Theodoor?"

"Why," said Grenits, "he has [illegible]e[illegible]ved me with a summons."

"Ai—! that means a few days' free lodging for you, my friend. Well, never mind, we will come and look you up now and then—wont we, gentlemen?"

"To be sure we will," was the general chorus.

"Time enough to think of that," said Grenits. "If I am locked up I shall expect to see you, my friends. But just at present we have something more serious to attend to. About that sale—I invite you all to put in an appearance on Monday next."

"That Grenits always has an eye to business," said one of the young men with a laugh.

"Gentlemen," continued Theodoor most gravely, "this is no joking matter. It concerns an innocent man who hitherto has maintained a mother and sisters entirely dependent upon his aid—and the question is whether he will, in the future, be able to continue to give them that assistance?"

"Oh, is that it!" was the cry all round, "then we shall all be there—you may depend upon us!"

"Yes, you may depend upon every one of us!"

"Thank you," said Grenits, "that's a bargain."

Yes! William Verstork was removed from Banjoe Pahit and was to be sent to Atjeh! The detailed report which he had dispatched to Reijnaal had been of no avail. He might perhaps have over-estimated his friend's influence—or, perhaps, that friend did not much like to meddle in the matter; at all events nothing came of Verstork's appeal. The letters also which van Nerekool had written to Batavia led to nothing. He did receive a kind of answer; but they were only a few vague and half intelligible sentences.

What really happened in Batavia was this. On a certain Friday—the usual day on which the Council of India meet—the assembled members were greatly surprised at seeing the Governor General suddenly appear in their midst, a thing which very seldom happened.

"Gentlemen," he said, after the customary ceremonial greetings had been exchanged, "Gentlemen, a very serious complaint against a first-class Controller has been forwarded to me by the Resident at Santjoemeh. I have also received a document from the subordinate officer, containing his defence to the charges made by his superior. This document directly contradicts many of the Resident's statements, and it is for that reason that I am desirous of having the advantage of your opinion. Now the Resident at Santjoemeh is a most zealous and meritorious public servant, thoroughly devoted to his country's interests; but it must be said that in the discharge of his duties, and especially in his conduct towards his subordinates, he is frequently too absolute and peremptory, and allows his feelings to get the better of him. I must, at the same time, however, confess that even thus he never loses sight of the common-weal. Such being the case in this matter also, it would not have been difficult for me, I think, so to settle the dispute as to satisfy both parties without in any way interfering with the superior officer's authority. Unfortunately, however, the question is a more complicated one. The difference between the Resident and his Controller is one which seems to implicate the opium-farmer at Santjoemeh, and which threatens to bring us into conflict with him. I think indeed I may go a step further, and that I am justified in saying that a strict investigation, such as the controller insists upon, would bring to light certain transactions which would compel us altogether to exclude the present farmer Lim Yang Bing from the approaching contest for the opium monopoly. Now, in strict justice, that exclusion would no doubt be highly desirable; but we must not lose sight of the fact that this Lim Yang Bing is the wealthiest Chinaman in Santjoemeh, that he stands at the head of the most considerable company in that district, and that he thus exercises almost absolute control over his countrymen there. The consequence, therefore, of excluding him from the coming opium competition, would be a very considerable fall in the amount which, at present, it is expected to realise. And that, in days like the present!—Yes, gentlemen, I repeat it, at a time like the present!—Just now I received a telegram in cypher from the Hague, which tells me that the estimate of the Colonial Secretary has found no favour in our house of Representatives; because it is thought that his estimate is much too low, and that expenses have not been sufficiently kept down. That telegram further states that one of you gentlemen will most probably soon be invited to take the place of our present Colonial Secretary. Well—whoever he may be, I cannot say that I envy him the distinction. It is quite certain, however, that the first thing he will be expected to do, is to drive up the revenue to as high a figure as possible, and, for that purpose, the opium monopoly, in spite of what men may think or say about it, seems to me to be the only available means. In order, therefore, not to make the task of the future minister more difficult than it must of necessity be, it is my opinion that it would be good policy just at present to protect the opium farmer. The Resident of Santjoemeh tells me that the withdrawal of Lim Yang Bing from the competition will make a difference in the revenue of at least six or seven hundred thousand guilders."

At the mention of these figures, the eyes of the youngest member of the Council sparkled with unwonted fire, and, in his zeal for the public exchequer, forgetting the usual etiquette, he interrupted the Governor General before the latter had quite finished his speech.

"With your Excellency's leave," said he, jumping up from his seat with much animation, "I would remark, and I feel confident that, in what I am about to say, I shall but utter the sentiments of all my colleagues, that under circumstances like the present, we ought not to hesitate to adopt any measures which may serve to make the finances of the country correspond to the demands of the times. Any proposal which may promote such equilibrium cannot fail of ready acceptance from a board such as ours, which, inspired by the highest patriotic feelings, is ever prepared to make any sacrifices for the welfare of Holland."

The appeal was so shameless that its very grossness insured its success. The members of the Council bowed their heads in acquiescence, and the lips, which could have uttered such terrible truths, under the influence, doubtless, of the enervating effect of the tropical sun, now merely opened sleepily to utter an obsequious:

"Yes, your Excellency!"

The Governor General, who at once perceived that he had gained his point, then said with a sigh:

"In that case my course with the Controller is clear. I am much obliged to you, gentlemen, for your counsel."

The next moment the drum was rolling at the main guard, and the men turned out to present arms to the king's representative as he drove away to his palace on the Koningsplein, well satisfied, no doubt, that he had performed a signal service to his country, if not to humanity at large.

In four days' time William Verstork received the order of his removal to Atjeh, and, what was perhaps more galling still, along with it a letter from the Director of the Home Department, in which that official expressed the hope that, in his capacity of Controller, he would make the best use of his undoubted abilities and of his great knowledge of the native character to aid and assist the military authorities in their arduous task of pacifying the population. And, the director went on to say: "Allow me also to cherish the expectation that, in the future, you will exhibit a greater amount of tact; and to suggest that you should show more deference and respect to your superiors; for, after this plain warning, you can expect no further indulgence."

"Well, Charles," cried Verstork, as he flung the letter upon the table, "what do you think of that?"

"I think it is a burning shame!" replied van Nerekool, his voice trembling with indignation.

"You see, my dear fellow," continued Verstork, "this is the most favourable result we could anticipate. Removed to Atjeh! that is to say struck off from the list of the Home Department of Java and Madura. It is simply a degradation. Are these the principles which animate our rulers? The state of society out here is rotten—rotten to the core!"

"No, no!" cried van Nerekool, with animation, "don't say that—there is one part of that society which is sound and undefiled, and which stands high above the tricks and paltry intrigues of the ruling powers—and that is the judicature. The power of the law will succeed in bridling and subduing the monster of injustice and tyranny."

Charles van Nerekool spoke these words with all the enthusiasm of truth—he was fully persuaded of the truth of his assertion. Verstork looked at his friend and a bitter smile came over his troubled countenance. He did not, however, say a single word, he would not disturb the day-dream of his friend—the future, he knew, would soon enough dissipate his fond illusions.

Banjoe Pahit, that quiet and secluded dessa, was, on Monday morning, the scene of the greatest excitement.

At the gate of the Controller's house a Javanese stood striking measured blows on the gong, and that unwonted noise brought the entire population around him. Within the house, Grenits, Grashuis, and van Nerekool were busily employed helping Verstork to set out the furniture, which, presently, was to be offered for sale, to the best advantage. In one place a writing-desk had to be placed in a more prominent position—in another a cupboard or table had to be re-arranged. Pictures also and statuettes had to be placed in the most favourable light; for Grenits, with the true eye of a commercial man, knew that, next to advertising, a tasteful exhibition of the articles would attract the attention of the buyers.

At length all was considered in readiness, and it was with a kind of mournful satisfaction that the friends walked through the apartments, surveying and admiring the arrangement in which they had borne a principal share. In the back galleries especially, where the glass, the crystal and the dinner-services were displayed, their finishing touches had been remarkably successful.

Everything looked so neat, and in such perfect order, that Grenits could not help exclaiming:

"No one would think that these are bachelor's quarters! William, I can promise you an excellent sale."

Meanwhile the gong kept on clanging incessantly.

Just then a couple of carriages came rolling up to the Controller's house. Out of one of these stepped the Regent of Santjoemeh, and he at once walked up to the European gentlemen. After the customary saluations:

"Well, Kadhen Mas Toemenggong," said Grashuis hugely pleased at seeing the Javanese chief arriving thus early, "you are coming, I hope, to buy a good lot!"

"Perhaps, sir, but money is scarce," replied the Regent with a smile.

"Never mind that, Kadhen Mas," laughed Grenits, "you can buy on tick."

The cautious old chief smiled and shook his head, but had no time to reply; for by this time the second conveyance, a capacious drag, had discharged its load which consisted of a member of the firm of Gladbach and Co. and the whole of his staff of clerks, &c.

The agent walked up to Verstork, shook hands with him and whispered:

"Very bad news, Controller!"

"What is the matter?" asked Verstork.

"The Chinamen at Santjoemeh have been ordered not to come to your sale."

"Who gave that order?"

"I don't know," replied the agent shrugging his shoulders. This was bad news indeed; for the Chinamen, if they happen to be well disposed towards the owner, are generally very brisk bidders. Their abstention indeed threatened to be very disastrous.

Verstork heaved a deep sigh as he ran his eye over his possessions which now bid fair to go for an old song. He sighed, not because he particularly regretted the probable loss; but at the thought of his dear ones yonder who—

But fortunately he had no time for indulging in melancholy forebodings, for the carriages now succeeded one another with amazing rapidity. Drags, landaus, waggonettes, dog-carts, and spring carts, came flying up the drive and began setting down their loads at the entrance of the Controller's house. A great number of horsemen too and pedestrians from the estates round about, began to flock in; and the oppassers on duty found it as much as they could do to keep the carriages in line, to put up the saddle-horses and to usher the gentlemen into the house.

All ranks of European society in Java were there represented; landowners, tenants, coffee planters, rice-planters, sugar and indigo manufacturers, merchants, insurance agents, shipping agents, solicitors, notaries, barristers, judges, officers of the Army and Navy, in fact it seemed as if the whole of Santjoemeh had migrated bodily to Banjoe Pahit. In the capital all business was at a standstill; there was not a single conveyance, not a single spring-cart or carriage to be got there. The Resident van Gulpedam noticed that these vehicles did not occupy their usual stands, and was told that they were all off to Banjoe Pahit.

He smiled at the information; but it was on the wrong side of his mouth.

Still the gong went on giving forth its harsh discordant sounds.

The employés of the Home office and its clerks and writers, who were employed in the Residential office, were conspicuous by their absence. Not one of them had been able to get leave for an excursion to Banjoe Pahit.

The Javanese population, in their usual retiring way, timidly crowded round the animated scene. These poor people most assuredly did not come to buy, they were impelled by curiosity just to get a peep at the interior of a European's dwelling house.

Treêng, treêng went the gong incessantly. When the company had pretty well assembled, and compliments had been duly exchanged, Verstork left the place. He could not bear to be present and see his household gods dispersed. So he went to the Mohammedan priest, with whom he had some matters to settle before he left the dessa, and after the sale was over he purposed to return to Santjoemeh with van Nerekool, Grashuis and Grenits.—

No sooner had he left, than the representative of Gladbach & Co. whispered a few words to the auctioneer. The latter made a sign to one of his servants. Hereupon the gong began to clash more horribly than before, a shower of blows fell on the metal disc. This infernal din lasted for a space of ten minutes, and then suddenly ceased altogether.

The proceedings now began.

The sale was opened in the front gallery in which a very fine collection of flowers in ornamental pots and tubs, were tastefully arranged in groups of a dozen, on the steps which led up to the verandah. These were the first lots to be disposed of.

"Twelve pots of flowers!" began the auctioneer, "who will make a bid for them?"

"One guilder!" cried someone in the crowd.

"One guilder bid, one guilder!" cried the auctioneer in the usual drawl.

"One and a half!"

"One and a half," repeated the auctioneer.

"Two guilders! Three guilders! Four guilders! Five guilders!" came the bids in quick succession.

"Five guilders! Five guilders bid!" cried the auctioneer, "Who bids higher? Five guilders are bid," drawled the auctioneer, as he turned his head and stared hard at the last bidder but one.

"Eight guilders!" cried the latter.

"Eight guilders!" cried the echo, "who bids higher?" Then the fire opened again.

"And a quarter," cried a voice.

"Eight and a half!"

"Eight three quarters!"

"Nine guilders!"

"Ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen!"

"Thirteen guilders," cried the auctioneer, "who bids more than thirteen?"

"I wouldn't mind," cried a voice, "if I only knew how to get those confounded pots home to Santjoemeh."

"Never mind that," shouted another, "I will take them for you in my cart."

"Thirteen, twice!" said the auctioneer.

"Fourteen, fifteen," went the bids.

"Fifteen!—once!" said the auctioneer.

"Twenty guilders!" shouted a voice which rang out above all the noise.

"A fine bid," murmured Grenits.

"Twenty guilders, once—Twenty, twice—Twenty for the third and last time!"

Bang! down came the hammer.

"Who is the buyer?" asked the clerk.

"I am," replied an officer. He was an elderly man—a first Lieutenant of Infantry.

"Who is I?" asked the auctioneer from his perch.

"I, Langeveld, first Lieutenant of Infantry."

"Mr. Langeveld, do you pay cash down?" asked the auctioneer.

"Cash down?" asked the officer, quite surprised, "what do you mean? Your office always gives three months' credit."

"Only to those whose pay is above two hundred and fifty guilders," said the man.

"Two hundred and fifty guilders? Whose order is that?"

"It is the order of the superintendent of sales at Santjoemeh," replied the auctioneer.

"The Resident," muttered van Nerekool, "a most infamous trick!"

"Do you pay ready money? No?' continued the auctioneer, "then you will have to find some security, or else the lot will have to be put up again."

The officer, who was a man of unblemished name and character, turned fiery red at this wanton and unexpected insult.

"Lieutenant Langeveld, I will be your security!" cried van Nerekool.

The officer bowed his thanks. The second lot of flowers, however, which was much finer than the first, did not fetch a rix-dollar. The shameful dodge at headquarters evidently had its effect on the spirits of the buyers. Grenits saw the drift of all this in a moment. He held a hasty consultation with van Nerekool and a few landowners who were standing by him. Just as the third dozen of pots were being put up, a burly, broad-shouldered gentleman cried out:

"A word with you, Mr. Auctioneer. A disgraceful trick is being played here—I never saw such a dirty thing done before—a trick which Mr. van Nerekool, Mr. Grenits and myself are determined to frustrate. For every gentleman who wishes to buy at this sale, and who may happen to fall under this novel condition of having to pay ready money, we will stand security."

"Bravo! bravo!" was the general shout.

"Does that satisfy you, Mr. Auctioneer?"

The man nodded assent. He could not do otherwise. This incident served to rouse a general enthusiasm; the third lot of flowers brought eighty guilders; the last no less a sum than two hundred and fifty. True it is that before this last lot was put up Grenits had cried:

"Crotons! magnificent crotons! The Adal-adal! (Croton Tiglium); the Camilla (Rothlera tinctoria); the Kamillakkian (Croton Corylifolius) and the wax-bearing Croton (Croton sebiferus)! Who will bid for them? I bid sixty guilders!"

A cheer followed his words; the game went on merrily—seventy—eighty—ninety guilders! Higher and higher still went the bids, until the two hundred and fifty guilders were reached. The lucky man who secured the lot received quite an ovation, just as if he had drawn the first prize in the State lottery.

That set the ball a-rolling. Chairs, tables, mats, lamps, wardrobes, mirrors, pictures, all went for the same fabulous prices. At last it became a mad charge in which every one seemed bent on securing something, no matter at what cost. Long faces were drawn indeed; but it was not because the bids were too high but because the prices were wholly out of the reach of some pockets. It was in the back gallery, however, that the excitement rose to its highest pitch.

"Twelve liqueur glasses!" shouted the auctioneer. They were very ordinary little glasses—in Holland they might be worth a penny a-piece—in India they might cost perhaps five or six pence.

"Twelve liqueur glasses!" again shouted the man.

"Out of which the bitters taste remarkably good!" cried Grashuis, "I know that by experience."

"We might try some," cried a voice; "yonder in that stand I see a decanter of bitters."

A cheer followed this proposal—a servant was already busy pouring out the liqueur.

"What kind of bitters is that?"

"Maagdbitter," said a sienjo.

"Pahit prawan," translated an interpreter.

A thundering hurrah greeted that splendid attempt at translation.

"I say, Kees, you must be made interpreter—sworn interpreter!" shouted one of the bystanders.

"Here's to you; I drink your health in pahit prawan!"

"One rixdollar!" cried Grenits.

"Three! Four! Five! Six! came the bids, in rapid succession. The auctioneer could not turn his head fast enough to catch the eye of the bidders.

"Six!" at length he managed to exclaim.

"Seven! Eight!—"

"Ten!" cried Grenits.

"Ten offered," droned the auctioneer with the utmost indifference. This was not the first strange scene he had witnessed in his profession.

"Ten!" cried he, "won't any gentleman go higher than ten."

"Come, come, that is pretty fair," said a voice.

"Ten once, ten twice, ten for the third and last time!"

Bang! down came the hammer.

"An expensive set," grumbled some one in the crowd, "a hundred and twenty guilders—the bitters must be good at that price."

"Especially pahit prawan!"

"Well, give us another glass."

The last lot put up for sale—a gajoeng, that is a simple cocoa-nut vessel with a handle used for throwing water over the body in the bath, fetched five and twenty guilders.

The friends of Verstork might well congratulate each other. They had worked to some purpose. When half an hour later the clerk posted up the total receipts, the house very nearly came down with the deafening cheers.

"Nine thousand seven hundred and forty guilders!" exclaimed Verstork, when he heard the result of the sale; "why, the whole kit was not worth three thousand. Thanks, many thanks, my friends."

He shook hands warmly with van Nerekool, with Grashuis, with van Beneden and with Grenits. "You have saved me many an hour of dreadful anxiety," he whispered to them.

Eight days after, the Controller was standing, in excellent spirits, on the deck of the Tamborah which was to convey him to his new abode. Full of courage and full of hope, he took leave of the trusty friends who accompanied him to the steamer.

"Once again," he cried to them from the deck, "thanks, a thousand thanks!"

Grenits had helped him to realise as profitably as possible the proceeds of the sale, and when he reached Batavia he had sent a considerable portion of the money to his mother, recommending her to be very careful of it, as he might most probably be obliged, in consequence of his removal from Banjoe Pahit, to diminish the amount of his monthly remittances.

When the Tambora was nearly on the horizon there were still handkerchiefs waving farewell to him from the shore-boat.

Verstork still kept on deck gazing at the shore. "Fine noble fellows," he muttered as he wiped away a tear.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE COURT ADJOURNED.

On a certain day, not very long after the events narrated in the former chapters, a carriage drew up before the pandoppo of the Regent's house situated on the green of Santjoemeh, where the members of the judicial bench of that district used to hold their court.

Out of the carriage there stepped a gentleman who looked with some surprise at the concourse of people which had gathered around the house; but who, nevertheless, with calm and dignified air, walked up the steps which led to the interior.

That gentleman was Mr. Zuidhoorn, the president of the district-court, who, on the day appointed, had come to open the session.

The crowd assembled in front of the Regent's pandoppo consisted chiefly of Javanese, a circumstance which could not but attract the notice of the judicial functionary, inasmuch as the native population, which was formerly so fond of frequenting the courts held under the Wariengien trees of the village green by its native chiefs, now shows the greatest disinclination to enter the Dutch courts of justice.

As a rule, the Javanese is never seen there except he be fettered or under the escort of a couple of policemen—that is to say, either as a prisoner, as a criminal, or as a witness. Among the crowd some Chinamen also were conspicuous, and all were evidently awaiting with anxiety an event of no common interest.

"What is the meaning of this concourse, Mr. Thomasz?" asked Mr. Zuidhoorn of the deputy-recorder, whom he met as he entered the pandoppo.

The latter, who was a half-caste, looked up at his chief with a puzzled expression of countenance.

"You stare at me very strangely," continued Mr. Zuidhoorn. "What can have brought all this crowd of people together?"

"They are curious, I suppose, to know," replied the recorder, not without hesitation, "how it will end."

"How will what end?"

"Well, sir, what will be the result of the session."

"The session?" repeated Mr. Zuidhoorn, surprised in his turn, "is there anything very remarkable about it?"

The recorder evidently felt very ill at ease.

"Sir," he stammered, "you seem not to know what has taken place."

"No, I don't," replied Mr. Zuidhoorn, "what is the matter?"

Mr. Thomasz was getting more and more nervous. His face, which was very sallow, began to assume a greenish yellow complexion. Mr. Zuidhoorn seeing the man's confusion cried out:

"Speak up for goodness sake, man, speak up!"

"The native members—of the council, sir—have received a letter from the Resident—" he managed to stammer.

"A letter—!" exclaimed Mr. Zuidhoorn—"from the Resident! What in the world about?"

"It was a letter, sir, forbidding them to attend this session."

"Forbidding them to attend!" exclaimed Mr. Zuidhoorn, now fairly astonished. "Why, Mr. Thomasz, have you taken leave of your senses?"

"No, sir, indeed I have not," replied the recorder with a painful smile. "You question me and I am obliged to answer— and further—"

"Well, what else? Out with it!"

"The Chinese assessors and the head-djaksa have received similar communications— so that—"

"So that what?" cried the president impatiently.

"So that there will be no court held to-day since you will be the only member present."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the president. "I tell you what, Mr. Thomasz, my carriage is still at the door, you jump into it and drive off at once to all the native members, and also to the Chinese assessors, and to the djaksa, and tell them that I order them to come here without delay. To-day is the assize-day, and I am determined that the cases shall be heard."

"I will do as you bid," replied the recorder. "You are my superior officer."

"Very good—make haste."

As soon as the man had left, Mr. Zuidhoorn began pacing up and down the pandoppo in great excitement.

"It is a monstrous thing!" cried he to himself, "I could not—I dared not—suppose that they would carry matters so far! Yet I ought to have foreseen something of the kind! Yes—I am a great fool—why! when a few weeks ago I received a request from the Resident to alter the order of the cases, a request with which I refused to comply, then I suspected that there was some scheme on foot; but that they would have adopted so arbitrary a course as this! A few days ago even, when I received a written statement from the Resident informing me that I was no longer competent to preside over the court, because I had obtained leave of absence, even then I could not suppose that they would have recourse to so high-handed an infraction of the law. Yesterday the Resident informed me by word of mouth that he intended to avail himself of the right of presiding in person; but I made no reply, for I looked upon his words as a merely formal notice, and never dreamt that anyone could be foolish enough to tamper so offensively with the regulations of the court. Yes! for a most stupid thing it is thus to enforce an old and obsolete rule, which was made when, as yet, there was no idea of any individual being specially appointed as President of the Sessions. But— what can be the drift of all this? What can it all mean?" he asked himself as he paced up and down.

His eye lit upon the charge-sheet which the recorder had left lying on the green-baize cover of the table. He took it up and began to read out the cases inscribed upon it, making his remarks upon them as he went on.

"M°. Bok Bardjo: accused of secretly conveying away coffee! Poor people who are compelled to plant coffee, and are not allowed to drink it; but are obliged to put up with a wretched decoction of coffee-leaves!

"Bariedin: charged with wearing in public a civilian's cap—Ridiculous! Those fellows in the Home Department do make fools of themselves—such a trifle is high treason in their eyes.

"Sarina: charged with deserting her infant child—that's bad—not so bad however as flinging the poor little thing into the river or the canal as they generally do at home in such cases.

"Pak Ardjan: accused — of — opium — smuggling — and wounding—a policeman! Now I think I am coming to it—now a light dawns in upon me; and the next case?

"Ardjan: accused—of—opium—smuggling! Ardjan, the future husband of the baboe Dalima!"

These two last cases Mr. Zuidhoorn had read so slowly and so deliberately that he seemed almost to spell every syllable; then, for a while, he stood lost in thought, while he put his finger to his forehead.

"How could I have forgotten that? And van Nerekool, who so recently talked the whole of this business over with me!— And—the day after to-morrow I must be off to Holland!

"Well, no matter, those cases must be disposed of to-day, and they shall be disposed of at any price! I shall see about that!"

Yes, the judge would see; but not in the sense in which he meant it; he would see that the court was not to sit at all that day.

When he had got thus far in his soliloquy, the door opened, and the Regent of Santjoemeh appeared, and with him came one of the most considerable of the native chiefs of the Residence, Radhen Ngahebi Wirio Kesoemoe. They were both members of the court, and it was their turn to be in attendance. They were accompanied by the panghoeloe or priest, carrying the inevitable Koran in his hand. Both the former dignitaries confirmed the statement of the deputy-recorder, and told Mr. Zuidhoorn that the Resident had expressly forbidden them to attend the court on that day. "But," they continued, "since the Kandjeng toean judge has summoned us, we feel it our duty to obey his commands."

"But," asked the president, "what reason does the Resident give for this prohibition?"

The Regent merely shrugged his shoulders and, very prudently, made no reply. Radhen Ngahebi however said:

"Yesterday I called upon the Resident, and then the Kandjeng toean informed me that, after having got leave of absence, you were no longer qualified to take the chair at the sessions; and that it was for that reason he had sent the letter."

Mr. Zuidhoorn smiled contemptuously; but, in the presence of natives, he refrained from uttering a single word which might have even a semblance of questioning the authority of the highest official who was the representative of the Dutch power in Santjoemeh. Indeed he scarcely had time to speak, for very soon after the Javanese chiefs and the Chinese assessors also entered the pandoppo. They very cautiously and with infinite circumlocution informed the toean lakkel, thus they pronounced the word "rakker" which signifies judge, that they were not to blame for arriving so late.

At length the chief djaksa appeared. He made a ceremonious bow to the chairman and to the other members of the court and said, that he had that very morning been summoned into the presence of the Resident, and that he had, from his lips, received a peremptory order not to attend the court.

"However," he continued, "in my capacity of native judge I am under your immediate authority, and I have come to inquire how you wish me to act in this matter."

As he spoke he made another deep bow to his superior officer.

"Djaksa," replied Mr. Zuidhoorn, "I have no commands whatever to give you. You occupy so high a position that I must leave you to judge for yourself what course you had better pursue. As far as I am concerned, I have most positively made up my mind to carry on the business of the court to-day; and, seeing that our number is now complete, I intend to open the proceedings at once. Gentlemen, please to take your seats."

Scarcely, however, had they done so, and just as Mr. Zuidhoorn was in the act of bringing down his presidential hammer and declaring the sessions opened, the back door of the pandoppo was thrown open and the private secretary of the Resident appeared on the threshold. He was in official costume and accompanied by a posse of policemen, one of whom held aloft behind him the Resident's unopened umbrella, in token that the secretary appeared as representative of his chief. Without deigning to offer any greeting, the secretary began:

"You, Radhen Mas Toemenggoeng Pringgoe Kesoemoe, and you, Radhen Ngahebi Wirio Kessemoe, and you, Panghoeloe Mas Ali Ibrahim, and you, Ong Ang Thay, and Kwee Lie Liang—you have, as members, as priest, and as assessors of this court of justice, received a written order from the Kandjeng toean Resident distinctly forbidding you to attend here on this day. The Kandjeng toean Resident now sends me to inquire what can have induced you to commit so grave an offence as knowingly and deliberately to disobey the command of him who is the direct representative of the Kandjeng toean Governor General, who again in Batavia stands in the place of the Kandjeng toean Radja dari Tana Nederland dan Hindia? Speak, I am prepared to hear what explanation you have to offer for conduct so insubordinate? Be well assured that whatever may be your excuse, the Kandjeng toean Resident will give it his calm and impartial consideration."

The deepest silence succeeded this startling address. With the exception of the chairman, the men assembled there seemed annihilated by the secretary's words, they hardly dared to draw a breath, they scarcely ventured to look at one another. They wished the ground would open and swallow them up. How could they have had the audacity of daring to disregard the express command of the Mighty Lord? Their disobedience was indeed flagrant! Would the Kandjeng toean ever forgive them for it? Such were the thoughts which passed through the brains of the fearless and independent judges who were considered fit and proper persons impartially to administer justice to their countrymen.

Mr. Zuidhoorn—who thoroughly knew the Javanese character and who had learned to fathom the abject and cringing servility of the native chiefs towards their Dutch masters—Mr. Zuidhoorn, who so often had compared them with the dog that licks the hand of the man that strikes him—looked with compassion on the poor creatures that showed such abject cowardice even when sitting in the very court to which they had been summoned to discharge duties, which, above all other duties, demand perfect fearlessness and independence. This servility, indeed, could hardly be laid to their charge; it was the natural result of the long system of extortion and bullying to which their race had been subjected.

Once again the secretary very impatiently asked: "Radhen Mas Toemenggoeng and Radhen Ngahebi, I am still awaiting the answer I am to carry to the Kandjeng toean Resident!"

After having looked round and waited a while to see whether any of the chiefs thus addressed would attempt to say anything in justification, Mr. Zuidhoorn, in a most dignified and impressive manner said:

"An answer, Mr. Secretary, which I will take upon myself to give you. I, in my capacity of President of this court of Santjoemeh, to whom the members, the priest and the assessors, in all matters relating to this court, are directly subordinate, I, this morning, sent to them my peremptory orders to attend here. The said members and assessors, therefore, are in no wise to blame—they have merely, in this matter, obeyed the commands which I, their superior officer, have issued to them. The entire responsibility rests upon me. Be kind enough, Mr. Secretary, to communicate this my reply to the Resident; and do not, by your presence, any further delay the business of this court."

"Mr. Zuidhoorn, after leave of absence has been granted you, you have no right whatever to occupy the chair. I enter my protest against the course of action you have seen fit to adopt; and I call upon you now to resign your place to the Resident who intends this day to preside in person."

"Mr. Secretary," replied Mr. Zuidhoorn with the utmost calmness, "it is not my intention to enter into any argument with you about my rights. You will inform the Resident that I shall not resign my seat; and that I intend, to the last moment, to carry out conscientiously the duties of my office. Again I request you to withdraw, in order that the court may proceed with the business it has before it."

"Mr. Zuidhoorn!" cried the secretary, in a threatening tone of voice, "mind what you are about!"

"The entire responsibility rests upon my shoulders, Mr. Secretary. Usher, clear the court, and see that it be not further disturbed!"

Mr. van Gulpendam flew into a foaming rage when he received the message. In a towering passion he strode up and down the front-gallery of the Residence, the secretary striving like a dog to keep up with him, which his corpulence however would hardly allow him to do.

"What insolence!" shouted the great man, "what insolence! He shall pay for it! But—what to do now? Meanwhile the trials are going on, and we shall have an acquittal no doubt. Those law chaps are capable of anything! I know what I shall do—a company of soldiers! I shall have them driven out of the place at the point of the bayonet like so many seamews!"

He rushed into his office—forgetting, in his anger, that such Napoleonic measures are not exactly suited to the taste of the Dutch people—to send a note to the officer in command of the troops requesting him to come to him at once. As soon as he had written his precious epistle he bellowed out "Oppas! Oppas!!" in tones so stentorian that all the policemen and the whole staff of servants on the premises came flying to the spot, thinking that some dreadful accident had happened. Even the sentries, who were on duty, heroically brought their muskets to the charge against some imaginary foe; and, in this martial attitude, resolutely stood awaiting the things which might happen. Fair Laurentia was at the time very busy in the pandoppo discussing with her kokkie the mysteries of a fricasseed chicken. She also started up and came flying into the office while, with trembling hand, she sought to adjust her kabaja.

"What is the matter? What is the matter?" she cried.

But, before the Resident had time to reply, and before he had despatched his note to the officer in command of the garrison, the deputy-recorder walked up the steps of the gallery.

The moment he saw him, van Gulpendam knew that he was the bearer of some tidings, and, not able to restrain his impatience, he ran to meet him, impetuously crying out, "What is the matter, Mr. Thomasz?"

"Resident, I have come to inform you that the court has risen and stands adjourned for a week."

"What? adjourned? After what my secretary told me? Have the members refused to sit? Splendid fellows those natives!"

"No, no, Resident, by your leave—the chiefs did not refuse at all."

"Didn't they? Then how did it come about?"

"I will tell you, Resident. When Mr. Zuidhoorn was about to open the proceedings and when he spoke the words: 'Usher, clear the court and see that it be not further disturbed,' he found that the usher had disappeared altogether."

"The usher disappeared?"

"Yes, Resident, he had got out of the way."

Van Gulpendam's face beamed with satisfaction.

"But," said he, "that would hardly put a stop to the proceedings?"

The secretary here interposed and said:

"As I was leaving the court I ordered the usher to write, from my dictation, a paper summoning Mr. Zuidhoorn and all the members of the court to clear out of the premises."

"Sharp practice that!" remarked van Gulpendam.

"Do you not approve of my conduct, Resident?"

"Of course, most certainly I do; but what took place next?"

"The poor devil of an usher was so utterly dumfoundered that he could not hold a pen, and it was no use therefore to dictate anything to him. I then gave him the message to deliver verbally."

"Yes—and then?" asked van Gulpendam.

"Then I came away to tell you."

"But I suppose," continued van Gulpendam—"you, Mr. Thomasz, will be able to tell us what happened?"

"When the usher again entered the court," resumed the deputy-recorder, "he stammered forth a few incoherent and utterly unintelligible words, to which Mr. Zuidhoorn did not pay the slightest heed. He brought his hammer down, declared the session open, and turned to the chief djaksa to request him to read out the first charge."

"What case was it, Mr. Thomasz?" asked van Gulpendam with some curiosity.

"Oh, it was some case of coffee-stealing, sir, some old woman—"

"Oh yes, all right, go on!"

"Yes," continued the deputy-recorder, "Mr. Zuidhoorn might well look—and he did open his eyes uncommonly wide, for the chief djaksa, who, a moment or two before, was sitting by his side close to him,—he too had vanished."

"Vanished?" Mr. van Gulpendam burst out laughing. "I can picture to myself Mr. Zuidhoorn's face!" he cried. "Mr. Thomasz, you are a capital story-teller. Do go on—run off the log-line."

The deputy-recorder continued:

"They looked high and low for the djaksa; but he could not be found. So one of the vice-djaksas had to be summoned. It was a curious thing however, that, although a few minutes before two or three were present in the pandoppo, they now had the greatest trouble to lay hands on a single one."

"Oh!" interrupted van Gulpendam, "they managed to get one in tow at last?"

"Yes, Resident."

"What a pity!" The exclamation escaped from the Resident's lips in spite of himself.

"There was no harm done, however," continued Mr. Thomasz.

"How so? Go on with your tale."

"Well, sir, when Mr. Zuidhoorn told the vice-djaksa that he called upon him to fill the place of the absent official, the poor fellow most suddenly was seized with a violent fit of colic!"

"A fit of colic!" laughed van Gulpendam. "What fun, what fun!"

"Yes, and so severe was the poor fellow's attack that he made the most extraordinary grimaces—in fact it literally doubled him up."

"Oh how rich—how very rich!" cried van Gulpendam still laughing immoderately.

"And, at length—with both hands to his stomach—was compelled to rush out of the room."

"With both hands!" shouted van Gulpendam, "come anchor, anchor! Thomasz, you will be the death of me."

The deputy-recorder looked around with much gravity—never before in all his official career had he had such success as a low comedian, and, thinking he might venture further, he resumed:

"Aye—but—Resident, that was not the funniest part of it."

"Not? well give way—full speed ahead!"

"No, Resident, the funniest part of the whole business was Mr. Zuidhoorn's face. That's what you ought to have seen. He sat there, with his mouth wide open, scowling over his spectacles which hung down low on his nose, after the retreating figure of the colic-stricken djaksa; and, in his loose gown, he looked for all the world like an old gingham umbrella in a cover much too big for it."

"That will do! that will do! Mr. Thomasz," grinned van Gulpendam, "you have told your story splendidly!"

The deputy-recorder made a low bow in acknowledgment of the compliment.

"And what happened next?"

"Why then, Resident, nothing could happen—there was no djaksa, no usher of the court—so the session could not go on. The members present were smiling and were beginning to look at their watches; evidently they had had quite enough of sitting there to no purpose. So Mr. Zuidhoorn had no option—he brought down his hammer and adjourned the court for a week. Thereupon I hurried off at once to bring you the news."

"And capitally you have done it, Mr. Thomasz! I am much obliged to you—at the proper time I will repay your zeal."

As soon as the deputy-recorder had left, van Gulpendam turned to his secretary who, with folded arms, had stood listening to the conversation.

"Our object, you see, has been attained—now to take advantage of the fair tide. You must take care that all the documents are ready in good time—next week I purpose to take the chair myself at the assizes."

"Everything shall be in readiness, sir," replied the secretary; "but will you allow me to make one remark?"

"By all means, secretary—fire away!"

"The whole of this business seems to me to be a very serious game."

"How so?" exclaimed van Gulpendam, "do you think I am afraid of burning my hands in cold water?"

"What I mean, Resident, is this. It is a very lucky chance indeed that Mr. Zuidhoorn happened to disregard your injunction and that he was thus compelled to adjourn the court for another week."

"Well!" cried van Gulpendam impatiently, "cut it short."

"If he had not done so," continued the secretary, "you would this day have presided—would you not?"

"Certainly, and then we should have settled matters by this time."

The secretary scratched his ear.

"Resident," said he thoughtfully, "are you sure of Mr. Meidema?"

"Sure of Meidema? what has he to do with it?"

"The opium-haul they made at Moeara Tjatjing," continued the secretary, "is a pretty valuable one. I fancy that Meidema is rather looking forward to reaping some benefit from the confiscation which must follow the sentence of the court."

"Has he told you so? Has he given you any hint to that effect?"

"Not exactly, Resident. But you must remember Mr. Meidema has a large family to provide for; and it is whispered in Santjoemeh that he finds some difficulty in making both ends meet. Indeed it would not surprise me to hear that he is in debt. So, you see, a little windfall of that kind would come in very handy."

"But," said van Gulpendam "he has no right to any such thing—the law forbids it."

"You are quite right, Resident, nothing ever escapes your eagle eye; but yet—'*il y a des accommodements avec le ciel*,' and therefore—"

"But how?" asked van Gulpendam testily.

"Look you, Resident, that I can't tell you—I don't know; but I fancy some loophole could be found. In this particular case, for instance, baboe Dalima is the real discoverer. Now supposing she, in order to save her Ardjan, should hand over her share or part of it—and remember she can have not the slightest idea of its value—to a third party?"

For a moment or two the Resident reflected, then with a smile he turned to his secretary and said:

"Well—even if that were so—that does not explain to me why I should distrust Mr. Meidema. As far as I can see, any hope of sharing in the profits of the confiscated tjandoe would make him as pliable as spun yarn."

"It is very possible, Resident, your judgment is seldom at fault; but you must not lose sight of the 23rd clause of the opium-law. For myself, I would not mind swearing that Mr. Meidema is shaping his course with his eye on that particular clause. In the case which he, as head of the local police, has drawn up, you will notice that though he states the opium to have been found not far from the prisoner Ardjan, yet he takes care to add that the Javanese came ashore in a small surf-boat which could not possibly have conveyed so large a quantity, and which, moreover, was dashed to pieces by the waves; whereas the packages discovered show no trace whatever of having been in contact with water."

"Is that mentioned in his report?"

"Yes, Resident, it is, and there is something else. He draws attention to the fact that the schooner brig Kiem Pin Hin was seen cruising about off the coast on the night in question, and that the cutter of the Matamata gave chase to a boat of the smuggling vessel."

"Did you read that report?" asked van Gulpendam who now began to be really alarmed. "Very possibly you are on the right tack," the Resident muttered rather than said. "Now, Mr. Secretary, be kind enough to hand me Mr. Meidema's report as soon as ever it reaches our office, and further send an oppasser to request that gentleman, in my name, to step over here at once."

This, of course, was a dismissal *in optimâ formâ*.

When van Gulpendam found himself alone he looked up the act of 1874 and said:

"The secretary mentioned clause 23 I think. Let us see. Oho! a fine of one thousand to ten thousand guilders! And, when I come to consider how, on the evening of the occurrence, Mr. Meidema laid stress upon the exact value of the capture of tjandoe—Yes, then I am driven to confess that our secretary may perhaps be in the right channel after all."

He sprang up from his seat, and with rapid steps began to walk up and down the gallery.

"Oh!" cried he gnashing his teeth with vexation—"all this bother brought on by that wretched fellow van Nerekool! Oh—if Anna would but consent!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

PARENTS *v.* DAUGHTER; DUTY *v.* AUTHORITY.

YES, if Anna would but consent! But, that was the very thing she would not do.

After both her parents, who were so strangely unlike their high-minded child, had employed every means in their power to induce Anna to join their conspiracy by using the influence she had over van Nerekool, the girl had replied: "No, never!" just as firmly and just as resolutely as Charles himself had uttered those words in reply to Mrs. van Gulpendam in the garden of the Residence.

"No, never, never!" said the true-hearted girl as emphatically as it was possible to pronounce the words.

"But remember," cried Laurentia, "his whole career depends upon the attitude you choose to assume in this matter!"

"Charles shall never condescend to seek promotion by stooping to a mean, dishonourable action," was the girl's reply.

"Anna!" shouted the Resident, in a furious rage, "take care what you say! I advise you to keep some check upon your tongue!"

"For goodness sake, Gulpie," interposed Laurentia soothingly, "now do be quiet—anger will not mend matters." And then turning again to her daughter, she continued: "And Anna, I wish you not to lose sight of the fact that the possibility of your union with van Nerekool depends wholly on your present line of conduct."

"My union!" sadly exclaimed the poor girl.

"A woman who is really in love," continued her mother, "has a very considerable amount of power to influence the man upon whom she has set her affections."

"But, mother, do you then really wish me to try and persuade Charles to lend himself to an infamous breach of duty?"

"Anna, don't go too far!" roared van Gulpendam, beside himself with anger.

"Would you," continued Anna, "would you have me deliberately widen the gap which is already growing between us? No, no, I shall not do that. All joy has been swept out of my life for ever; and I have now but one wish left, and that is that my image, pure and unsullied, may continue to live in his memory. I can never become his wife, that I know well; but my name at least shall remain with him as fair and as spotless as the remembrance of a blissful dream!"

"But, Anna," persisted her mother, speaking in her most honeyed and winning tones, "but, Anna, my dear girl, why should you talk thus? Why should there be no joy for you in this life? Surely that is tormenting yourself quite needlessly."

"Oh, mother!" cried the poor girl, "do spare me the pain and the sorrow of having to utter words which will be most distressing to you and most painful to my father to hear. No, no! Of happiness for me there can be no further question—of a union with van Nerekool, I must never again allow myself to think!"

"Ah," sighed Laurentia, "if you would but—"

"Yes, mother, just so, if I could but—But I will not. Suppose, for a moment, that Charles were weak enough to yield to my persuasion. Suppose I could succeed in talking him over, and could get him to consent to your proposals. Why then, from that very moment, every tender feeling would be wiped clean out of my breast. If such a thing ever could be—why then, I would utterly despise a man who is ready to offer up his duty to his inclination; and who could be base enough to stoop to a crime, in order to win the girl upon whom he has set his heart."

"Anna, not another word!" cried van Gulpendam, in the most threatening accents.

"But, father," she continued, "surely I ought to tell you what my feelings are. I must give utterance to thoughts which seem to choke me! As certainly as I know that I wish him to keep a pure and stainless memory of me—so surely am I convinced that he also, on his part, desires nothing more fervently than that his name should dwell with me, as it does now, great, noble, and strictly upright! Oh, I could not, indeed, bear to face the life of utter desolation, which would be in store for me were I compelled to despise him whom now, above all human beings, I look up to as noble and great. No, no, if such a thing could ever come to pass—then my misery would be too great a burden to bear! Come what will, the memory of Charles shall always remain unsullied in my heart."

Mrs. van Gulpendam could but heave a deep sigh, while her husband was trembling with suppressed rage.

At length he exclaimed, in the tones of a man who has fully made up his mind, "Let us cut this short, it has lasted too long. I take it then, Anna, that you absolutely and finally refuse to accede to your mother's suggestion?"

"Yes, father—I do refuse most positively," said Anna, in a tone not one whit less resolute than her father's.

"Mind, you are utterly spoiling all his prospects in life," said van Gulpendam, warningly.

"Better that," was her reply, "much better, than that I should rob him of his honour."

"It makes your marriage with him impossible."

"I know it but too well," sighed Anna, "but I cannot help that—the fault of that lies with my parents."

"How can you make that out?" exclaimed Laurentia.

"He cannot, and he never shall, marry the daughter of parents who could venture to make him such infamous proposals!"

"Anna!" roared her father, "you are utterly forgetting yourself—it is time we should have no more of this. A girl who dares to make use of such language to her parents shows herself unworthy of them. I fully intended to put an end to this nonsensical love-story altogether. It has, indeed, already compromised you. I intended to send you away, for a while, on a visit to Karang Anjer; and I meant you to start on your journey next week. Now, however, I change my mind; and you must be off at once—to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow morning!" exclaimed Laurentia. "What will the Steenvlaks say to this sudden change of plan?"

"Assistant Resident Steenvlak," replied her husband, "has been suddenly called away to Batavia. He has been obliged to leave Mrs. Steenvlak and her daughters at Karang Anjer, and, as he may be away from home for a considerable time, the family will no doubt be glad enough to have someone to stay with them during his absence. However that may be, Anna will, I am sure, be welcome. I am going to my office this moment and will at once send off a telegram to Karang Anjer. To-morrow morning Anna will start for Poerworedjo, a friend

of mine will be there to meet her, and he will take her on in his carriage to the Steenvlaks. She will travel by way of Koetoe Ardjo and Keboemen."

Laurentia heaved a deep sigh. "We shall have but very little time to get her things ready," said she. The remark itself and still more the way she made it, showed plainly enough that the bother of this sudden departure touched her much more nearly than the separation from her child.

"Oh! mother," said Anna as quietly as possible, "pray leave all that entirely to me. I shall be quite ready to start to-morrow, as early as ever you please."

"Do you intend her to stay long with the Steenvlaks?" asked Laurentia.

"That will very much depend upon herself," was van Gulpendam's reply. "I don't want to see her face again, unless she consents to return in a much more submissive mood, and is prepared to behave in a dutiful and becoming manner to her parents."

As he uttered these words, van Gulpendam glanced at his daughter hoping—perhaps expecting—that he might detect in her some signs of relenting. But, though she was deadly pale, Anna did not betray the feelings which were stirring within her. On her placid features there was no trace either of irresolution or of defiance; there was nothing but quiet determination and settled purpose.

"You have, I presume," continued the Resident, "well weighed and thoroughly understood what I said?" He rose and prepared to go to his office.

"Certainly, father, I have understood you perfectly. To-morrow morning I leave this house never to set foot in it again. Even if you had not so decided, I myself would have insisted upon an immediate separation."

"Oh, ho! Does the wind sit in that quarter? And pray, may I be allowed to ask my proud and independent daughter what plans she may have formed for the future? She surely must be aware that she cannot quarter herself for an indefinite period of time upon the Steenvlaks?"

Van Gulpendam, as he put the question, assumed a tone and manner in the highest degree offensive and taunting.

But Anna would not allow herself to be ruffled and, in the calmest possible way she replied:

"You ask me, father, what are my plans for the future, and I must beg you to allow me to keep my intentions to myself.

For the present moment I gladly accept the hospitality of the Steenvlaks. You know how fond I am of the two girls and how much I respect and admire their mother. But, as to the future, my plans are, at present, I must confess, very vague. I do not very well know what to say about them; and, even if I were ever so anxious to give you my confidence, I could hardly tell you what I intend to do. Of one thing, however, you may rest assured—whatever may happen, I shall never again be a source of trouble or expense to you."

"Indeed!" replied van Gulpendam, still in his sneering tone. "Indeed! And so my daughter seems to fancy that she can step out into the wide world without a penny in her pocket! I am very curious to learn what impressions she may have formed of that world."

"You must pardon me, father," replied the young girl still very quietly; "but now you compel me to touch upon a subject which I feel is a very delicate one. You have given me an education which has but very poorly fitted me to provide for my own maintenance. Yes—I might, perhaps, earn something by giving music lessons; but here in Java I could not well do so without casting a reflection upon your name. To go to Holland and there have to roam about the streets in search of employment—the very thought is repugnant to my feelings. But all these are matters for future consideration."

"Oh, you think so?" sneered van Gulpendam, "for future consideration! Now, it appears to me, that in such schemes, the earning of money ought to be the first and most important consideration."

"Such being your opinion," replied Anna with a sigh, but no less resolutely and calmly than before, "I must now come to business. I did not think I should ever have had to speak to you on this subject at all—indeed the matter would never have crossed my lips, had not necessity compelled me to speak out freely. Two years ago, you remember, we received the news that Grandmamma van Gulpendam had died at Gouda. The same mail which brought us the sad tidings of her death, brought me a letter forwarded by her lawyer. In that letter the dear old lady took a most affectionate leave of me and told me how much she regretted that she had never had the opportunity of seeing me or becoming acquainted with me. She informed me further that, in her will, she had left me the sum of 30,000 guilders, and that, as soon as I was nineteen, the money would be at my disposal. She begged me, however, not to mention the matter to you as she did not wish to deprive you of the pleasure of giving me that surprise on my nineteenth birthday. Her lawyer merely added a few words confirming my grandmother's communication; and he went on to tell me that he had invested the capital in the 4½ per cents, and that, by the express desire of the deceased, the money was not to be realised. Well, the interest of this sum, which is mine and which you will hardly refuse to give me, is amply sufficient for my present wants. Next year I shall be nineteen and I shall then have the power to dispose of the capital. By that time I shall have made up my mind as to the manner in which I can most usefully employ it."

All this, the young girl spoke so naturally and so quietly that both her parents, who latterly had gained some insight into the character of their daughter, understood perfectly well that they had to deal with a resolution which nothing could shake. They were, indeed, greatly surprised to find that Anna was so well informed as to the dispositions which her grandmother had made in her favour; but they felt that denial or resistance to her claim were alike impossible. Indeed her better nature began to prevail over the mother, and tears stood in her eyes as she said:

"Anna! poor child! what a terrible future you are laying up for yourself!"

"Mother," was the girl's reply, "a future more terrible than that which must await me here, I cannot possibly conceive. What worse misfortunes can overtake me? I defy Fortune to be more cruel to me in the time to come than she has already shown herself in the past."

At these words van Gulpendam rose from the seat he had resumed. He put his hand to his throat as if to clear away something which was rising there and threatened to choke him. But, his was a tyrannical nature, and he at once repressed the natural emotion which, he feared, might overcome him. The very consciousness, indeed, of the fact that his child was so much purer, so much better and stronger than he was himself, was unbearable to him.

"Yes! yes!" he exclaimed, "that is all mighty fine—very fine and very romantic! Unfortunately it lacks common sense. We have now said all we have to say to each other and the upshot of it is that I stick to my resolution; and that to-morrow morning early, you leave for Karang Anjer."

"I am not aware, father," said the girl with much dignity, "I am not aware that I have made any attempt to alter your decision."

"Very good, that settles the matter!" cried van Gulpendam, and then, with concentrated fury in his voice, he continued: "We shall find some way of breaking that little temper."

These were his parting words as he turned to go.

On the morrow of this most painful interview, just as day was about to dawn, a carriage stood waiting at the steps of the residential mansion. It was one of those light conveyances drawn by four horses which Europeans often use in the interior of Java where railways are unknown, and which are well suited to traverse long distances along broken roads and steep mountain paths. Under the back seat of this vehicle was strapped a small travelling bag, only just big enough to contain a few necessary articles of clothing. Anna had made up her mind that she would not take away with her out of her father's house any single thing but what was strictly necessary. Even that she would have left behind, but for the consideration that the interest of the money left her by her aunt which, for the last two years, had not been paid to her, amply sufficed to cover the value of the few things she packed up. Not a single jewel, not one silk dress, not the least bit of lace, did that little bag contain. She carefully left all those superfluities behind her, and would carry away nothing but a little underclothing and a couple of plain muslin dresses.

The small travelling trunk had scarcely been strapped into its place before Anna herself appeared in the front gallery. She was clad with the utmost simplicity in a black dress, and dark-coloured bonnet. There was on her person nothing whatever to catch the eye but the plain linen collar and the cuffs round her wrists, and these narrow strips of white seemed only to increase the demureness and earnestness of her appearance. As she thus prepared to leave her parents' home, she was alone, not a soul was by to comfort her. The rosy dawn was casting its friendly light over the garden, upon the shrubs, the flowers, the leaves, and even over the furniture of the verandah; and the young girl cast a yearning, sorrowful glance upon all these familiar objects which awakened so many memories in her breast. For an instant it seemed as if she hesitated; but it was only for an instant, for hastily brushing away the tears which were silently stealing down her cheeks, she sprang upon a splendid Devoniensis which was growing against the balustrade, and hastily plucked one just opening bud which she put into her bosom as she muttered with a sob: "My darling flower, you shall go with me into exile!" and the next moment she had jumped into the carriage which immediately started.

Not another sigh, not another look. The final separation was thus accomplished. The vehicle rumbled heavily through the massive and highly ornamented gates, and then with all speed made for the hill-country of the interior of Java. Anna meanwhile throwing herself back in the carriage gave way to sad reflections.

But all the while, hidden by the Venetian blinds, Anna's mother had been standing and watching her daughter with feverish anxiety. She had caught the desolate expression in Anna's eyes as she glanced around upon all those familiar objects which from childhood had been so dear to her; she had seen the girl plucking that rosebud, and her eyes had eagerly followed her as she sprang into the carriage. Then a hoarse cry escaped from her lips, "My God, my God," she sobbed, "has it come to this? Where there was everything to ensure happiness! How will all this end?"

Aye indeed; how was it all to end? That was a question to which the future was to give a terrible answer.

Late on that afternoon, Anna arrived at a small dessa in the interior, and left her carriage while a change of horses was being made. She asked the postmaster if he would allow her to sit down and rest awhile in his bamboo verandah, and he very readily granted her request. Then she drew forth her writing materials and was soon wholly absorbed in the work of writing a letter. For a few moments she sat irresolute, her pale and careworn face plainly enough showing that she had a most difficult and serious task before her. First she heaved a deep sigh; then two big, burning tears slowly trickled down and fell heavily on the paper before her. But at length, by degrees she appeared to be carried away by her subject, and she wrote on in feverish haste. Yes, the subject of that letter was indeed to the young girl a serious and difficult one; for she was composing her last letter to her lover van Nerekool. In the condition of utter loneliness in which she then was, she laid bare her whole soul to him, and, although words thus written were intended to meet the eye only of him to whom they were addressed; yet the novelist is guilty of no indiscretion if he should glance over the young girl's shoulder to gain an insight into her feelings and thus give the motive for her actions. The letter was not a very long one; yet it cost poor Anna a great deal of anxious thought.

"Mr. van Nerekool," she wrote, "from the evening when we met on the occasion of the ball at the Residence, I have, in spite of all your endeavours to obtain another interview, purposely avoided seeing you again. On that occasion you asked me to become your wife, and I allowed you to speak to my parents on the subject. Under those circumstances you were no doubt perfectly justified in seeking for further intercourse with me, and it is for this reason that I now address these last words to you. After I left you in the garden, you had a long interview with my mother, and it was not until the following morning that I learned what had been the subject of conversation between you. Pardon me, Mr. van Nerekool, for I know that a child ought not to criticise the actions of her parents; but it is that conversation and the fact that my father endorses everything my mother then said, that makes my union with you impossible. Yours is an upright and loyal nature, and you cannot and must not think of making me your wife after the infamous proposals which have been made to you. You will say perhaps that a child is not guilty of the actions of her parents and cannot be held responsible for them. In that you are perfectly right, and I must tell you that my conscience is as clear, and that, if in my present forlorn condition I may be allowed so to speak, I, at this present moment, hold up my head as high as before I knew anything of my mother's designs. But to be always face to face with the man to whom the odious propositions were made; to be ever conscious, even in our tenderest moments, of the fact that I was flung to the man I love as the price of dishonour, that is a prospect which to me is utterly unendurable. You are a gentleman, and, as such, you would, no doubt, always have treated my parents with deference and with the proper show of respect; but to know that all this must be a mere empty show put on in deference to a daughter's natural affections, O Charles!—allow me for the last time to call you by that dear name—O Charles! that would have made life an intolerable burden to me, and must inevitably, in the end, have destroyed your happiness also.

"I am writing these words to you from Sapoeran where I am resting for a few minutes while we are changing horses. You have, no doubt, heard that I am going on to Karang Anjer to stay with the Steenvlaks. My father, I know, has proclaimed that fact loudly enough and it must have come to your ears. Yes! I am now on my way to that lonely retreat; but that is only the first stage on the long and difficult road which lies before me. Do you ask what I intend to do? Well, my dear friend, I myself do not yet know what my future course will be. It is most probable that I shall try and get away to Europe, or perhaps to Australia. This much, however, is quite certain; that after my visit to the Steenvlaks I shall disappear altogether; for the very name of van Gulpendam has become hateful to me. But, Charles, when I shall have vanished, when even my very name shall no longer be mentioned, and I shall be as one over whom the grave has closed; then, I know, you will be generous enough to give a thought now and then to the poor girl who, innocent of even a thought of evil, would have esteemed herself only too happy to have been able to call herself yours; but for whom such happiness was not reserved. One request I have to make. Do not lose sight of Dalima. I know her sad condition. I know all about it. I know more about her misfortunes, at least as far as its authors are concerned, than you can do. But, for my sake, I know you will not leave that unhappy girl to her fate. I have no doubt that on the pretended accusation of opium smuggling, she will be found guilty, and condemned. I know it but too well! With our false notions of right and wrong, whenever opium enters into any question, no other result is, I fear, possible. But, oh! I beg of you, do not abandon her. Do not allow her, when once she regains her freedom, to sink into that pool of infamy into which all her countrymen inevitably fall, when, guilty, or not guilty, they have once come under the ban of our criminal law. And now, dearest Charles, farewell! In this world we shall meet no more. I will not, I cannot, ask you to forget me, a passing thought you will sometimes bestow upon her who now will bear no other name than

"ANNA."

This letter the poor girl put into the hands of the postmaster, and it was sent off in due course though not so soon as she wished; for in those inland parts the mail goes out but twice a week.

Although the distance between Sapoeran and Poeworedjo was not very great, yet the sun had fairly set before the carriage reached the latter place. Anna put up at the hotel, and, after having partaken of some refreshment, she lay down thoroughly wearied out by the journey, and fortunately she was soon fast asleep.

After this short digression which the thread of our story required, we return to the Residence at Santjoemeh.

When the secretary left the room, Resident van Gulpendam had bitterly exclaimed: "Oh, if Anna would but consent!"

For a while he seemed lost in thought and sat turning over in his mind how matters would have stood if Anna could have persuaded van Nerekool to give way, and if he, on the conditions proposed to him, had been appointed President of the court.

"Well!" he muttered at length, "it can't be helped. However, we shall manage I suppose to weather this Norwester and to get our boat safe into harbour."

"But," he continued, "what did the secretary mean by alluding to that clause in the opium-law? Let me see, which was it? Oh yes, I have it, clause 23. Just let us have another look at it!"

Herewith he took up the bundle of papers which he had replaced among other documents on the ledge over his writing-table. For some time he fingered the pages, turning them over impatiently, at length he exclaimed: "Oh, here we are! No. 228. Now let us see, clause 23—'All offences committed against the regulations herein laid down to which no special penalties are attached, are punishable by a fine of one thousand to ten thousand guilders for every hundred katies of opium or under, and of one hundred guilders for every additional katie?' By Jove! the fellow is right after all!—that's where the coast lies, is it? We shall have to get out another anchor. It is not at all a bad idea, but—"

"The inspector requests the honour of an interview with you Kandjeng toean!" cried one of the oppassers, as he flung open the door to announce Mr. Meidema.

"Show him in," was the reply.

"Resident," began the inspector as he entered, "I just now met your secretary, and he told me that you wished to see me."

"Quite right, Mr. Meidema, pray be seated. I have just seen your report on that smuggling business at Moeara Tjatjing; but I am surprised to find that your statement does not at all agree with the actual facts of the case."

"How is that, Resident?"

"No, Mr. Meidema, no it does not. Will you please try to recall our conversation on the very evening of the discovery?" continued the Resident with his eye steadily fixed upon his subordinate.

"I remember that conversation perfectly, Resident."

"Well," resumed van Gulpendam, "if my memory serves me, I then pointed out to you—and I did so by means of witnesses—that the opium was found in the possession of the Javanese called Ardjan. At the time you seemed to agree with me."

"Certainly, Resident, I did not just then venture to contradict the opinion you had formed, and which you so positively stated as your conviction. It was, however, my duty to investigate the matter—"

"And?"—interrupted van Gulpendam.

"And the result of that investigation has led me to the conclusions I have embodied in the report of the case which, as head of the police, it was my duty to draw up."

"Yes," hastily said the Resident, "against all probability, and in the teeth of the evidence!"

"By your leave, Resident," said Meidema, "the report—"

"Shall I tell you," broke in van Gulpendam, "shall I tell you to what your investigation has led you?"

But Mr. Meidema, carried away by his argument, paid no heed to the question, and continued:

"The report, for the matter of that, is not binding upon the court."

"That's a good job too," said van Gulpendam, somewhat sarcastically; "but I asked you just now to what your inquiry has led you."

"To what it has led me, Resident?" replied Meidema. "I think that is a very strange question, coming from you. I have, as I was in duty bound, held an inquiry simply for the sake of arriving at the truth."

"Of course, Mr. Meidema, that is supposed to be the object of every inquiry; but I think that this particular investigation may have led you to a somewhat different result."

"What may that be, Resident?" asked the other, calmly.

"It has led you to the discovery that the fines, which are to be divided among the finders of the smuggled opium, can more easily be recovered from the wealthy farmer than from the poor Javanese fellow out of which no one can screw anything at all."

"Resident!" cried Meidema, "such language—"

"Mr. Meidema, pray be calm. My words merely express the impression which your report has made upon my mind."

"But, Resident, I have nothing whatever to do with the fines. They are no business of mine. I am perfectly acquainted with the law on the subject, and I really do not know what meaning I must attach to your insinuations."

"Oh, come," said van Gulpendam scornfully, "do you think I am not up to all the dodges by which the law may be evaded?"

"Resident," said Meidema, indignantly, "I must really request you to modify your opinion of me. I never have stooped to any of the dodges you think fit to allude to. Not a single penny of the fines, not a single grain of the opium has ever come into my hands. And, allow me to say, that if you do not feel thoroughly convinced that when I say so I speak the bare truth—why then the office you hold compels you to lodge an accusation against me at head quarters."

"Mr. Meidema," said van Gulpendam, coolly, "we are, I fear, wandering away from our subject. You tell me that you have been holding an inquiry—do you not? Now pray let me know, whose evidence may you have heard?"

"Whose evidence? Why, in the first place that of the prisoner Ardjan—"

"Of course, he has told you that he has nothing to do with the matter, that I can quite understand. Whom else did you examine?"

"I next took the evidence of baboe Dalima—"

"Oh, yes, she also is locked up on a charge of opium smuggling; she has no doubt given her lover a most excellent character. Fine witnesses those of yours, Mr. Meidema, I must say. Have you any others?"

"Yes," replied the Inspector, quietly, "I have examined the dessa people who were that night pressed to assist in Ardjan's arrest."

"And?" cried van Gulpendam, impatiently. "Come, look sharp!"

"And their story contradicts, on almost every point, that of the police oppassers."

"Of course it does, those dessa dogs always hang together; but all that ought not to have satisfied you as Chief Inspector of Police."

"No, Resident, it ought not, I confess; and what is more, it has not," continued Meidema. "When the evidence appeared to me so very contradictory, I myself went down in person to Moeara Tjatjing, to inspect the boat in which Ardjan is said to have brought the opium ashore."

"And you found nothing?" inquired van Gulpendam.

"Oh, yes, Resident, I did. I found the surf-boat, and I am fully satisfied that it was much too small to contain the captured opium."

"If I remember rightly, Mr. Meidema," observed van Gulpendam, "that boat is said to have held two persons, Ardjan and Dalima?"

"Quite so, Resident."

"The boat then was large enough to hold those two, eh?"

"Yes, Resident, it might have done so; but there was room for nothing more."

"But," asked van Gulpendam, "supposing now that baboe Dalima never was in that boat at all—what would you say to that, Mr. Meidema?"

"Never in the boat at all, Resident!" exclaimed the other, in astonishment.

"In that case," continued the Resident, "I suppose there might have been room for the opium if carefully stowed away?"

"Well, yes, perhaps," said Meidema; "but the proof—"

"Oh, yes, the proof—I can find you proof enough. I myself can solemnly declare that, during the whole of that night, baboe Dalima never left my house at all. And not only so, but all the members of my family are ready to declare as much."

"Well!" said Meidema, "then all I can say is that the case is beginning to assume a very serious aspect."

"Why! What are you driving at now?" exclaimed van Gulpendam. "Come, man, fire away!"

"I mean that your statement directly contradicts the word of your daughter."

"My daughter—the chatter of a silly girl!"

"Not so, Resident," continued Meidema, very seriously, "I have in my possession a formal statement in Miss van Gulpendam's own handwriting, in which she gives a detailed account of baboe Dalima's abduction, of her forcible detention on board the schooner brig Kiem Ping Hin, and of her rescue by Ardjan."

Van Gulpendam turned pale at those words, he felt as if he had received a stunning blow; Mr. Meidema, however, did not allow him time to recover his composure, but continued:

"I have further in my possession the sworn testimony of the mate and the crew of the coastguard ship Matamata, which proves that on the night in question they manned the cutter in order to give chase to a surf-boat which contained two persons. That they fired upon them; but that they were compelled to give up the chase because of the tremendous sea that was running at Moeara Tjatjing in which their clumsy craft would have had no chance to keep afloat. Thus you perceive, Resident, that there were actually two persons in that boat, and that, consequently, there could have been no room for the opium. Moreover—"

"What else?" broke in van Gulpendam, who was gradually recovering from his surprise.

"Moreover, the surf-boat was dashed to pieces on the beach. I saw the wreck lying partly in the water and partly covered with mud, and I have witnesses to prove that the cases, in which the smuggled opium was packed, had not been in contact with sea-water at all. No, no, Resident, I am firmly persuaded that the stuff never came ashore in that boat, and further, that Ardjan has had no hand in the transaction."

For a few moments the Resident sat lost in thought.

"Mr. Meidema," he said at length, "have you, as you were bound to do, employed an expert to ascertain the quantity, the quality, and the particular kind of opium that was found?"

"Yes, Resident, I have done so."

"Have you secured the surf-boat itself?"

"Yes, Resident," replied Meidema, "I did so; but, owing to some strange neglect for which I am unable to account, the watchman at the town jail, who had charge of the boat and with whom I had deposited it for safety, had broken up the boat and used the timber for firewood."

A smile flitted over van Gulpendam's features, as he muttered, inaudibly: "I have found the leak, I can caulk it," and then, aloud, he said: "That's a thousand pities—to whose negligence do you ascribe that?—But, never mind, we can look into that some other time. Now, Mr. Meidema, will you allow me to give you a piece of good advice?"

"Oh, Resident, you know, I am always most happy to receive good advice," was the reply.

"Your finances," continued van Gulpendam, "are not in the most flourishing condition, I think. Eh?"

"Resident!"

"You have a large family—and your expenses must be considerable. Well then, my advice to you is this: Try and arrange matters quietly with the opium farmer."

"What do you mean, Resident?" cried Meidema, in utter amazement.

"You are shrewd enough, Mr. Meidema, to understand my drift. Lim Yang Bing is a wealthy man, and a kind, indulgent father. His son, you know, is on the eve of making an excellent match. He wont be so very particular just now as to what he pays."

"Resident!"

"And then," continued van Gulpendam, "another piece of advice let me give you. Very luckily for you the court, which was to have sat to-day and given judgment on that opium-case, has been adjourned. You see, you have yet time to alter that report of yours; which, I must say, appears to me to be drawn up with too much partiality."

"That I will never do!" cried Meidema, vehemently interrupting his chief.

"Mr. Meidema," resumed van Gulpendam, "I am merely giving you friendly advice. You have a large family—there are a good many mouths to feed. However, think the matter over well."

"No, never, never, Resident!"

"Very well, in that case our interview may be considered at an end. But don't be in a hurry, think it over well."

When Mr. Meidema had left, the Resident stood for a while gazing after him. At length, hoarse with passion, he cried out: "That opposition must be overcome."

CHAPTER XXV.

EVE'S DAUGHTERS AND THE SERPENT.

A COUPLE of days after Mrs. Meidema was sitting with her two daughters in one of the hinder galleries of her house. Our reader has already made a slight acquaintance with the pretty pair of twins on the occasion of the reception and ball at the Residence. They were now sitting with their mother, very busy mending a heap of boys' clothing which appeared to be in a deplorable state.

"It is too bad,—really it is shameful," said Gesina. "Now just do look at this, mother,—why the sleeve is literally torn out of it, and there is a huge rent right in the breast. I say, mother, do you think that jacket is worth patching up?"

"To be sure it is, Sijntje," replied the mother, "now just you set to work with a will."

"Those good-for-nothing boys!" cried Gesina, "they keep us stitching for them all day long."

"Come, come," threw in her sister Matilda, "boys will be boys, and ours are so full of spirits."

"That is no reason, I suppose," said Gesina, "why they should be climbing trees all day, and get their clothes in such a frightful state."

"How do you suppose a boy is to keep out of a tree?" asked Matilda. "If I were a boy I would do just the same."

The mother smiled at her daughter's warm defence of her little brothers. "Oh, yes," said she, "it would be a pretty sight to see Matilda up a tree."

The two young girls had a laugh at the idea, and then Gesina said, "Don't you think, mother dear, that you might get us a needlewoman to help us with all this heap of clothes."

"My dear girl, what are you thinking about?" asked Mrs. Meidema.

"Well," continued Matilda, coming to her sister's help, "I must say I think the idea a very good one."

"But, my dear girls, pray remember that a needlewoman would have to be paid, and pray where is the money to come from?"

"Anna van Gulpendam," put in Matilda quickly, "I know always has her needlewoman."

"No doubt she has," said Mrs Meidema; "but you must remember, Tilda, that Anna is an only child, and that she is, moreover, the Resident's daughter."

"Is there then very much difference, mother, between the income of a Resident and that of an Assistant Resident."

"I should think so, indeed," replied Mrs. Meidema; "the Resident draws fifteen hundred guilders a month at least, and your father has at the most but five hundred."

"So much difference as that," said Matilda, seriously; "indeed I never thought it was so much."

"And then, Tilda dear," continued her mother, "as I said before, the Resident has but one daughter, and we have five children to provide for."

"Are children very expensive?" asked Gesina.

"You can reckon it up for yourself, Sijntje—there is food to get and clothing and school-fees and—oh, ever so many odds and ends besides."

"It is a pity!" sighed the girl, after a while.

"What is a pity?"

"It is a pity that boys are such an expensive luxury, for they are jolly little fellows."

"Now did you ever hear such a girl?" laughed Mrs. Meidema, "first she grumbles at the trouble those good-for-nothing boys give her, and then she calls them jolly little fellows!"

"Well, mother dear, you must let me grumble a bit now and then, I really can't help it when we have such a heap of boys' clothes to mend," and with these words the young girl laid her fair head lovingly on her mother's shoulder.

"Money is not everything," said Matilda, sententiously, as she kept on stitching busily, while Mrs. Meidema was running her fingers through her daughter's flowing curls.

The difference between her father's income and the pay of Resident van Gulpendam led Matilda to make this philosophical remark.

"Of course not, Matilda," replied Gesina, "of course not; money is not everything—look at us now, are we not happy?"

"Yes," said Matilda, "and to complete the comparison, could anyone be happier even in the Residence itself? Oh, when I come to think over what has happened, I cannot help feeling very sad. Poor, poor Anna!"

"Have you had any news from her?" asked Gesina, who by this time had resumed her work.

"Yes, this morning I had a letter from Karang Anjer, such a wretchedly sad letter. Knowing Anna's character as I do I can read despair in every word, and I fear—oh, yes, I fear, the very worst—She is capable, I do really think, of any desperate deed."

"But," cried Gesina, "what can be the matter with her?"

"I do not know the rights of it all," replied her sister. "On those matters Anna is very reserved; but what I know is that her parents will not consent to her marriage with van Nerekool."

"Oh, she will soon get tired of Karang Anjer, and then we shall have her back again."

"I think not; indeed she writes to tell me that it is her intention never to return. Her letter is so full of sorrow, so miserably despondent, it reads to me like a last farewell—as it were a parting for life. She writes to me as her best and truest friend, and beseeches me not to cast a stone at her should her despair prompt her to a step which will make the world scorn her memory. Mother dear, what am I to do, what can I do to relieve her—I wish I could go to see her at Karang Anjer!"

"My dear child," said Mrs. Meidema quietly, "the very best thing you can do is to allude as little as possible, in your correspondence with Anna, to her attachment to van Nerekool. She has, as you yourself say, not taken you fully into her confidence; and from this you may conclude that there exist secrets which you cannot, without indiscretion, touch upon; and which it would only increase her pain to needlessly pry into. Time is the great healer, and it must have its soothing effect upon Anna in her distress. I know something of what has been going on, and I am in hopes that things may yet turn out well."

"You know what has happened, mother?" cried Matilda, "do tell me all about it. I am so dearly fond of Anna, that anything which concerns her has, for me, the greatest interest."

"Matilda," replied Mrs. Meidema, "Anna, who I do not think herself knows just how matters stand, has thought it right to keep silent before you. She has, in my opinion, acted very wisely."

"But, mother!"

"Yes, I say, she has acted very wisely in this matter, for she might perhaps have had to reveal to you a depth of wickedness which a young girl may very well remain ignorant of. You must allow me to follow her example. Just now you said, very wisely too, that money is not everything in the world. You were quite right, it is not. There now you see before you a family to which money is no object, which possesses moreover all other requisites for happiness, such as health, consideration, the highest position in our little society; and yet you see there is no happiness. No, money is not everything— But yet—"

As she said it, the poor woman heaved a deep sigh. The fact that she was sitting there with her daughters hard at work, showed plainly enough that the earthly dross was not altogether so indifferent to her as her words might seem to imply—and she hesitated to go on—her girls looked up at her with an inquiring glance.

"But yet?" asked Gesina. "Pray finish what you had to say, mother."

"Well," continued Mrs. Meidema, "I had but very little to add; yet a couple of hundred guilders a year more would greatly improve our position. We have very heavy expenses to meet, we have a great deal of money to find; and—"

The awning which separated the back-gallery from the grounds beyond, and sheltered it from the glaring light outside, was here suddenly flung aside, admitting a dazzling flood of sunlight which made the three ladies look up in surprise.

"Babah Lim Yang Bing wishes to speak with the master," said one of the servants.

"But your master is not in, he is at his office," replied Mrs. Meidema, "you know that as well as I do."

"I told the babah so, njonja," said the man.

"Well?"

"He wishes to speak to the njonja."

Mrs. Meidema made a gesture of impatience. But Lim Yang Bing, the wealthiest Chinaman in the residence of Santjoemeh—perhaps the richest man in all Dutch India—was not the kind of man who could very well be turned away. It was, moreover, no very unusual thing for him to come and pay his respects to the ladies and, on such occasions, he generally had some pretty little nick-nacks to show.

"Very well, show him in," said Mrs. Meidema.

The needle-work had in all haste to be put away and concealed, and some light fancy work had to be snatched up; for it would never do to let that Chinaman see a European family employed in such drudgery.

"Tabeh njonja, tabeh nonna nonna. Saja halap—"

But we will not attempt to reproduce the Chinaman's execrable Malay. In fact it would hardly be possible to do so, as the men of his nationality find the greatest difficulty to pronounce some of the consonants, and their talk is often extremely difficult to understand.

"Good-morning, madam; good-morning, young ladies," said he most courteously, "I hope I am not intruding. I thought I might have found the Assistant Resident at home; but since I am not so fortunate, I take the liberty of paying my respects to the ladies—in the first place to inquire after their health, and also to tell them a great piece of news."

"News?" asked Mrs. Meidema, who like most women did not lack curiosity. "Pray be seated, babah."

And, turning to the native servant who was sitting cross-legged on the steps of the gallery, she said:

"Todrono, bring a chair."

As the Chinaman took his seat, the two girls looked at him with wonder-waiting eyes.

"And now, babah, for your important news!" said Mrs. Meidema, somewhat eager to hear it.

"First," said Lim Yang Bing with another bow, "allow me to inquire after the state of the ladies' health."

"Oh, thank you," replied Mrs. Meidema, "we are all perfectly well."

"Toean Allah be praised," cried the Chinaman in high-flown tones, but with the sweetest of smiles on his lips.

"Now for your news, babah!" cried Gesina impatiently.

"Yes, nonna, I don't wonder at your curiosity, you are quite right, the young ladies especially will enjoy it."

"But, babah, do pray speak out, tell me what it is all about," cried Matilda as eagerly as her sister.

"Well," said the Chinaman, "it is about a wedding."

"A wedding!" exclaimed one.

"A Chinese wedding?" asked the other.

"Yes, ladies, yes, a Chinese wedding, as you say," replied Lim Yang Bing, laying as much stress as he could upon his words.

"Delightful!" cried both the young girls.

"And who may the happy couple be?" asked Mrs. Meidema somewhat more soberly.

"I may not tell you that, nja."

"Oh!" said Gesina with much disappointment in her voice, "then it is not decided yet."

"Yes," replied Lim Yang Bing, "it is quite certain; it is so far decided indeed that I have samples of the silk with me now."

"Samples of the silk!" cried both the young girls in a breath.

"Yes, the samples of silk. You surely must have heard, young ladies, that on such occasions the betrothed couple always make some little presents to the invited guests. And since you ladies will, I hope, honour me by witnessing the ceremony, I have ventured to bring the samples along with me. Very fine silk indeed; I ordered it on purpose from Nan Hioeng. But you must judge for yourselves, ladies."

Therewith he produced a small parcel which he carefully unfastened and the contents of which he displayed to the women's admiring gaze.

"Oh!" cried Gesina, "just look at that lovely green shot with red! what a charming dress that would make!"

"And," exclaimed Matilda, "what a splendid blue! Dark blue with flowers. If I had to choose, I would—"

"And will not Mrs. Meidema make her choice?" asked Lim Yang Bing.

Mrs. Meidema could not help casting an eye upon the seductive parcel but—she hesitated.

"Come, come, pray select a sample for yourself, madam," said the Chinaman with a supplicating look.

"But—babah—" she began, "I have never heard of gifts offered at Chinese weddings. I know they are customary at the New Year."

"Yes, yes njonja, you are quite right, on that occasion we offer gifts all round to all our acquaintances; but at a wedding we only do so to our old friends, and—I take the liberty of reckoning the Assistant Resident among my very good friends."

"Yes, but babah, you know Mr. Meidema, do you not?"

"Surely the njonja would not refuse my poor little present," interrupted the Chinaman.

"Oh, mother, dear!" whispered Gesina beseechingly.

"No, babah, I will not downright refuse; but before coming to any decision or making any choice, I must have a talk to my husband."

"Of course, of course," hastily said Lim Yang Bing, "that is nothing more than right and proper. It makes matters, in fact, easier for me, as perhaps, madam, you would not mind to intercede for me with the Assistant Resident."

"Intercede for you, babah!" cried Mrs. Meidema now thoroughly surprised. "You know that my intercession has but very little influence with my husband."

The Chinaman smiled—it was a cunning leer, as he said:

"No, no, madam, I did not mean you to intercede for me—I cannot have expressed myself properly—what I meant was—to intercede for the bridegroom."

"For the bridegroom?" asked Mrs. Meidema. "Oh, yes; but who is the happy man, babah?"

"Madam, that is a secret— However, I may just as well tell you at once; as soon as you know who he is I feel sure I can reckon upon your sympathy. Well, the happy man, then, is my son Lim Ho."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Meidema very coolly, "and who is the young lady?"

"Ngow Ming Nio."

"The daughter of Ngow Ming Than—is she not? A very pretty girl and a very rich girl too—I am sure I congratulate you, babah."

"And now, may I reckon upon you, madam, to intercede for Lim Ho?" asked the Chinaman.

"I do not see," said Mrs. Meidema, "in what Lim Ho can need my intercession."

"Ah, well," sighed Lim Yang Bing, "I fear that the poor boy is not in very good odour with the Assistant Resident. If only you would speak a good word for him, madam."

"But why? His marriage can have nothing to do with Mr. Meidema."

"No, njonja; but—" said the Chinaman dropping his voice, "You see there is something about an opium business in which the poor boy has got mixed up."

"I will have nothing whatever to do with that sort of thing!" exclaimed Mrs. Meidema now fairly frightened. "There, babah, please put those samples up again."

The Chinaman was taken aback, he reluctantly rolled up the parcel and slowly and deliberately put it into his pocket.

"But, njonja," he mumbled, "the poor fellow is as innocent as the babe unborn."

"I won't hear anything about it, babah, not another word, please, on the subject."

"If only the toean Assistant Resident would hear what he has to say," insisted Lim Yang Bing.

"Come, mother," whispered Gesina, who, to her infinite vexation saw the splendid silk dress fading away on the horizon, "If father would but hear what Lim Ho has to say for himself."

Mrs. Meidema again hesitated.

"Well," said she, "if my intercession is to go no further than that—I can see no objection to ask my husband to do that."

"Mother, take care!" said Matilda in a very low but very warning voice.

"I am infinitely obliged to the njonja," said the Chinaman as he took Mrs. Meidema's hand and gratefully pressed it. "I shall leave these samples here with you—"

"Oh, no! no! I will have nothing to do with them."

"But, mother," whispered Gesina.

"Mother, take care!" said Matilda as softly.

Lim Yang Bing did not at all like these whisperings of the two young ladies, and so he hastened to say: "My dear madam, I can assure you that those poor samples have nothing in the world to do with your pleading for my son. I have the honour of inviting you and your two charming daughters—and of course, Mr. Meidema—to be present at my son's marriage. There is not much harm in that I hope. I reckon you among my good friends and, as an acknowledgment of the honour which your presence will confer upon them, the young couple beg you to accept a slight present. In that no one will see any harm I hope; in fact it is simply our national custom. So far, I think we are agreed. This small parcel of samples I will leave here in order that the ladies may have time to make their choice and to talk over the whole matter with the Assistant Resident when he comes in."

Put thus plausibly, the offer could hardly be refused. But even if Mrs. Meidema had wished to make an objection she had no time to do so; for the wily Chinaman had very hurriedly put down the parcel on the table, had muttered his tabehs with a few hasty words to the effect that he intended to look in again and ascertain what choice the ladies had made, and then had disappeared.

When once the babah was fairly out of the place, the two young girls looked at each other and at their mother.

Gesina with a smile on her pretty lips, Matilda with a very serious expression of countenance.

"A Chinese wedding!" exclaimed the former. "No doubt there will be a reception and then, what a splendid dance we shall have. When the Chinese do give a party they know how to do it well!"

"Do keep quiet, Sijntje," said Mrs. Meidema. She spoke reprovingly, although, as a loving mother, she was pleased to see her girl's radiant looks. They had so few opportunities to go out, especially to such parties as this promised to be. Once a year they got an invitation to the Residence, and that was all.

"And how fine I shall look," continued the girl in her glee, "in my new silk dress." She took the parcel from the table, "Oh, yes," said she, "I have quite made up my mind, I choose the green silk. And you Tilda?"

"I don't know," replied the other, "but somehow, I feel that all this bodes misfortune."

"Oh, I say, how very silly! Just look at these samples!" cried Gesina as she opened the bundle. "Oh, what a splendid bit of brown silk—look mother, dear, that is something for you! And that deep blue is Tilda's choice; it is fine, yes it is very fine; but the green is to my mind the best of all. Just look—But—But—what is that!"

Gesina was spreading the piece of silk on her knee in order to bring out the fine effect of the colours. As she did so—something slid out of the packet and fell at her feet. For a moment the three ladies sat there as if petrified, for at a glance they had recognized bank-notes—papers of five hundred guilders. At length Gesina stooped and picked them up. She counted them, one, two, three—up to ten.

"Five thousand guilders!" she stammered in utter confusion. "How could they have got into the parcel? It must be some mistake of the babah's—surely he must have made some mistake."

"I feared as much!" thought Matilda almost aloud.

"Five thousand guilders!" The thought flashed through Mrs. Meidema's brain as she took the parcel and the papers from her daughter's hand, "Five thousand guilders!"

Her first impulse was to send at once after the babah and to call him back—to give him his money, and to have him and his samples and his notes kicked out of the house. Five thousand guilders! And the Chinaman was already so far away. Five thousand guilders! Was it wise to let the servants know all this—no certainly not—it would not be wise. Five thousand guilders! It was about as much as her husband's salary for ten months amounted to. She took up the notes, looked at them, smoothed them down one by one, then rolled them together. Five thousand guilders! That would pay all those troublesome tradesmen's bills, and even then, when every farthing was paid, there would be a nice little sum left. Then Meidema might get leave of absence for a while to go into the hill-country. He wanted a change, lately he had been looking very poorly—a couple of weeks' holidays in the hills would quite set him up. Five thousand guilders! The boys might have new jackets. All these thoughts however were cut short by the rumbling of carriage wheels on the drive.

"That is father!" cried Gesina, "quick! put away those samples and notes!"

She tried to seize them, she had already hastily rolled up the whole parcel together and was about to hide it under the coarse needlework with which they had been busy as the Chinaman came in. But her mother took it from her and quietly laid it upon the table before her. The voice of her husband was heard in the front gallery giving some orders to his servant, and that voice had startled the good woman out of the train of evil thoughts which had unconsciously risen up within her, and which had threatened to lead her astray from the path of duty. No, no, from the man by whose side she had courageously walked for the best part of her life, she could have no secret; from him, whom she had followed for so many years in weal and in woe, she would have nothing hidden. She determined to lay everything open before her husband, he might then act as he thought best. True, they were very poor; but she felt that she must abide by his decision.

All these thoughts, in a moment of time, flashed through the mind of this brave and loyal wife, and when Meidema walked into the back-gallery her mind was fully made up.

The girls jumped up to give their father the usual kiss, the mother also rose to welcome him. But Meidema saw, at a single glance, that there was something wrong. He put his hands on his wife's shoulders and steadily looking her in the face he said cheerily: "I say, mammy dear—is there any news?"

"Yes, Meidema, there is," replied his wife gravely, "sit down, I have something to tell you!"

"I say, old girl, you look very serious, are the girls in the way?"

"No, no, let them stay, I have no secrets that they may not hear—in fact I prefer them to be here."

"My love, how solemn you are! Is there anything wrong? Anything to do with them eh? Have they had an offer? No? Of course not, you would not have looked so black if they had."

"Now pray," said his wife, "pray do not talk such nonsense."

"Oh, I see, it must be those boys! they have been naughty—trousers torn, jackets in holes! Yes—those youngsters are an awful nuisance—Never mind all that will come right by-and-by."

"All that will come right!"—At those words he stopped short, poor man! his interview with the Resident then came to his memory and he began restlessly to pace up and down the gallery. He took out his cigar-case and looked at Matilda.

She jumped up, "May I light it for you, father?" she said.

She put the cheroot to her lips, lighted a match, and drew a few whiffs. As the smoke went curling up her nostrils and into her eyes, she made a funny little grimace—then she coughed slightly and closed her eyes, and, when the cigar was well lighted, she gave it to her father saying:

"Ah bah, horrid! How can you gentlemen like that nasty smoke?"

"Why you little minx!" said her father laughing, "you have lit it at the wrong end!"

"It is more economical, father."

"Perhaps so; but that is why it tastes nasty."

"Well, father," said Matilda suddenly growing serious, "now please sit down and attend to mother."

"Yes, Meidema, please sit down," said his wife; "I have to talk to you on a most serious matter."

"All right, wifey—here I am seated—now I am all ears."

"Babah Lim Yang Bing has been here this morning!"

"Indeed!—I met him a few minutes ago, he greeted me most politely—more politely in fact than usually."

"Do you know, Meidema, what he came here for?"

"What he came here for? Not I," replied the husband somewhat astonished at his wife's words. The name of the opium-farmer had roused some suspicion within him though he was unable to guess what his errand might have been. "I suppose," said he, after a moment's pause, "I suppose he merely dropped in to have a chat."

"Do you know," said Mrs. Meidema, "that his son Lim Ho is about to be married?"

"Yes, I have heard some such rumour. To the daughter of that rich old Chinaman—is it not?"

"Yes, father," interrupted Gesina, "to pretty little Ngow Ming Nio."

"Lim Yang Bing," continued Mrs. Meidema, "was here this morning to invite you and me and the girls to the wedding."

"All right," replied Meidema, "the girls will have rare fun; I daresay you know," he continued, as he patted the cheek of one of the twins, "you know a Chinese marriage is a most interesting ceremony. Is that then the reason why you all look so solemn? Oh, aye—I see—it is about the dresses. The other day when the Resident gave his ball we had some trouble about that. It is a great expense no doubt; but—"

"No, Meidema, that is not troubling me, for the Chinaman offers us a present."

"A present!" shouted the Assistant Resident.

"Yes, he tells me that, on such occasions, they always give presents."

"Quite right—some sweetmeats, a few cakes, perhaps. But what of that?"

"No, no," said his wife, "not sweetmeats at all; but silk for dresses."

"Silk!" cried Meidema, "the fellow must have gone mad! I never have heard of any such presents; and yet I have been a good while in India."

"He has even left some samples here with us," continued Mrs. Meidema, "very fine silk, I assure you, most splendid quality. But there was one slight condition attached to his gift."

"Indeed! a condition! what might that be?"

"That I should intercede with you for Lim Ho."

"For Lim Ho—oh, oh! and what did you say to that?"

"I told him I would have nothing to do with it."

"Where are these samples?" cried Meidema. "Hand them to me, I will fling them into the fire."

"Now Meidema, do be quiet for a bit!"

"Intercede for Lim Ho! So! they thought to bribe you with a yard or two of silk!"

"No, no Meidema, not only with a yard or two of silk—just open that parcel."

The inspector tore it open, and, in his excitement he cried, "Where is it?"

The banknotes fell to the ground. Pale and utterly unnerved he picked them up, he opened them, looked at his wife and daughters with a stern look; but he spoke not a word. At length, breaking out into a curse, he crumpled up the whole parcel of samples and notes together into one formless mass as he hoarsely cried: "The devil take that d—d Chinaman! the fellow shall pay for this!" And calling to his servant he cried: "Todrono, have the horses put in!"

Ten seconds later he had dashed out of the room.

CHAPTER XXVI.

NEATLY MANAGED.

* * * * * *

"YES, Resident, I accuse the opium farmer of a gross attempt at bribery.

Such were the words with which Mr. Meidema concluded his detailed account to Mr. van Gulpendam of what had taken place at his house that morning.

"Avast! Mr. Meidema, steady a bit! You are going ahead much too fast. Can you be quite sure that the five thousand guilders were concealed in that parcel of silk samples for the purpose of bribery?"

"I have already told you, Resident, that what he came for was to induce my wife to exert her influence over me in favour of Lim Ho. Yes, most decidedly. I know that the money was intended for a bribe."

"But, Mr. Meidema," observed the Resident, "would it not be much more charitable to suppose that Lim Yang Bing, who is, by nature, a kind and generous man, really felt some concern at your financial difficulties?"

"My financial difficulties!" exclaimed Meidema, fairly white with rage. "I should like to find out who spreads those absurd rumours. I am not rich, I admit; but if every man's affairs were in as good order as mine! Then—"

"Let us not get out of our course, my dear sir," remarked van Gulpendam, interrupting him at the right moment.

"Very good, Resident, I do not wish to do so; but who gives that confounded Chinaman any right to trouble himself about my private affairs. What right has he to offer my wife and daughters presents of five thousand guilders?"

"But, can you be sure it was meant for a gift?"

"What else could the money have been meant for?" asked Meidema.

"Well, I don't know," replied van Gulpendam, "but might not the notes have got mixed up with the samples of silk purely by accident? You ought to know how carelessly such fellows handle paper money, they sometimes have a whole bundle of it loose in their pockets. Now I am persuaded, on the contrary, that when presently you meet Lim Yang Bing the whole business will be explained to your satisfaction. I will send for him. Have you any objection?"

"None whatever, Resident; but the fellow may say or swear what he likes; it will not alter my opinion, and nothing will make me retract my charge against him."

"Don't be in such a hurry to blow off steam, Mr. Meidema, just allow me to prick your chart for you, and you will soon see that you are out of your course altogether."

Hereupon van Gulpendam called one of his oppassers, and ordered the man to mount, and to ride off full speed to the opium farmer's house. "Tell him I want him to come to me at once."

The two gentlemen had hardly spent half-an-hour in conversation on the ordinary topics of the day, when an elegant carriage, drawn by two splendid Persian horses, dashed up to the gate of the residential mansion. A few moments later a servant announced the opium farmer.

"Show him in," said the Resident.

Lim Yang Bing sauntered into the room with his usual listless air and with the stereotyped smile on his lips. The oppasser had already told him that he would find the Assistant Resident of Police with his Excellency, and he looked upon this as a good sign; and had no doubt but that his troublesome smuggling question would be settled off-hand. He therefore greeted the gentlemen with great cordiality. "Tabeh, Kandjeng toean, toean!"

The Resident pointed to a chair, and as soon as Lim Yang Bing was seated, he began:

"Babah, Assistant Resident Meidema, fancies that he has reason to complain of your conduct."

"No, no!" exclaimed Meidema, interrupting his superior officer, "I do not fancy anything of the kind, I actually do lodge an accusation against him."

Both gentlemen spoke in Malay, and the Chinaman was thus able to understand all that was said.

"And what cause of complaint may he have?" asked the Celestial, with his imperturbable smile.

"You ask me," replied Meidema, "what I accuse you of? I will tell you. I accuse you of offering me a bribe—to me, the head of the police!"

"I, Kandjeng toean?" asked the Chinaman, with well acted surprise. "When could I have done such a thing?"

"Not much more than an hour ago," was the reply. "Just now, this very morning at my own house!"

"The toean Assistant Resident must be poking fun at me. It is true that I met him a little while ago; but I had not the honour of exchanging so much as a single word with him."

"I know that well enough," interrupted Meidema impetuously; "but did you not this morning call at my house?"

The Chinaman looked upon the interview as a farce, in which every actor had to play his part. He had often acted in such little plays himself and had performed pretty creditably on such occasions. He continued therefore: "Oh, yes, Kandjeng toean, I did pay your ladies a visit, it was to invite you and them to the wedding, just in the same way, and for the same purpose, as I called at the Residence to invite the njonja and his Excellency."

"Indeed!" said Meidema, sarcastically, "I suppose you came to offer silk dresses to the njonja Resident? Eh?"

Lim Yang Bing winced under the blow; and his sallow face grew several shades paler. It was beginning to dawn upon him that matters were serious after all, and, in some confusion, he glanced at the Resident; but van Gulpendam, who was seated directly opposite to the Assistant Resident, could not, just then, make him any sign; yet Lim Yang Bing thought he could detect an encouraging expression in the Resident's eye.

"And," continued Meidema, with increasing vehemence, "that you offered the njonja Resident a roll of bank-notes also. Did you not?"

As he spoke these words, he flung the money down before him on the writing-table as if it burned his fingers.

At this the Chinaman turned livid—for a moment he was utterly confounded.

"There! you see, Resident!" continued Meidema, pointing to the farmer. "You see! Why, guilt is written in every line of the fellow's face!"

At these words Lim Yang Bing recovered his presence of mind, he jumped up at once, snatched up the crumpled notes, spread them out before him, and began deliberately to count them, "one, two, three, four—ten." Then slowly raising his expressionless eyes to Meidema's face, he asked:

"Does the toean Assistant Resident really intend to accuse me of attempting to bribe him?"

"Yes, babah, I do most decidedly accuse you of it."

"But, may I ask, why then does not the Kandjeng toean give me back the whole sum?" asked the Chinaman, very composedly, and with the usual smirk on his lips.

"The whole sum?" cried Meidema, utterly taken aback, "what on earth can the fellow mean?"

"Yes, toean," replied Lim Yang Bing, "I said, the whole sum. I have felt for some time that the toean Assistant Resident is by no means kindly disposed to me or mine; but I think it is not quite fair of him to fling me back a small part of my money, and so to try and ruin me, while he keeps back the greater part for himself."

All this he said without showing the slightest emotion, without the slightest heat, without so much as even raising his voice; but in the drawling sing-song way in which Chinamen generally speak; and with the obsequious smirk which Chinese features always wear when the owner is addressing a superior.

"Babah!" shouted Meidema trembling with rage, "take care of yourself, don't go too far!"

But Lim Yang Bing felt his advantage, and was not to be intimidated. With the same false smile and in the same drawling tones he continued:

"But I clearly see what the toean Assistant Resident is aiming at. The greater part of the present which I took the liberty of offering to the njonja he keeps for himself, and to that he intends to add the fine which Lim Ho will have to pay, should he be found guilty of smuggling instead of Ardjan. It is not at all a bad idea, I admit; but I leave it to the Kandjeng toean to say whether he thinks it quite fair and honest."

Meidema sat there as if thunderstruck. A terrible suspicion began to arise within him. Yes! his money matters were not by any means in a healthy state. His housekeeping was an expensive one, all that, he felt, was true enough. Could his wife under the hard pressure of circumstances—could she have been induced to yield to the temptation, might she possibly not have told him the whole truth? Might she perhaps have mentioned to him only part of the bribe she had received, just to see how he would take it? Yes! that must be it—His wife and his daughters! Yes! now it flashed across him that they seemed much confused when he came in. And then the line of conduct which he had adopted before the Resident who, he felt, was no friend to him—with an awful imprecation he sprang to his feet:

"Babah!" he exclaimed, "you are an impudent liar!'

"If the toean Assistant Resident becomes abusive," said Lim Yang Bing with the same imperturbable calmness, "then I must request the Kandjeng toean to give me leave to retire."

"Mr. Meidema," said van Gulpendam sternly, "I must beg of you to moderate your language."

"How much do you say there was in that packet?" asked Meidema, in despair.

"I offered the njonja Assistant Resident ten bank notes of a thousand, and ten of five hundred guilders."

Poor Meidema fairly moaned with anguish and dismay.

"Is that true?" he asked again, with faltering tongue.

"I swear it!" was the quiet reply.

"Oh! I must go and get to the bottom of this!" cried the wretched man, as he frantically rushed from the room.

The Chinaman and the Resident watched him with a curious smile.

"Splendidly parried, babah!" cried van Gulpendam admiringly, and then muttering to himself, he said: "I wonder what port that obstinate fool will make for in this storm."

"Perhaps the Kandjeng toean will now allow me to retire?" asked Lim Yang Bing, with much humility.

"Certainly, babah, certainly, let me not detain you." And, after the usual compliments had been exchanged, the Chinaman took his leave.

"Deep fellow that Chinaman, devilish deep! Aye, aye, those who dabble in opium must have their wits about them, they must know how to trim their sails!"

Foaming with rage, Meidema got home. He could not wait until his carriage had reached the door; it had scarcely got into the grounds, before he jumped out crying to the coachman, "Wait for me!"

He traversed the fore and inner galleries at a bound, and when he reached the back-room where the ladies of his family were still sitting at their needlework, he flew up to his wife, who, noticing at once his excited state, rose from her chair. He grasped both her wrists in his iron grasp, and, exerting all his strength, he forced her down on her knees before him.

All this had passed so quickly that, although the two girls had also sprung up, yet neither of them understood what was going on.

"There!" roared the infuriated husband, "there! that is your proper position! And now answer me. Where is the rest of the money?"

"What money?" asked his wife in alarm.

"The ten thousand guilders!" thundered Meidema.

"What ten thousand guilders?" asked his unhappy wife, still on her knees. "Meidema! let go my wrists, you are hurting me!"

"No, I shall not let you go until you have told me where you have hidden the money."

"What money are you talking about?"

"The ten thousand guilders you had from the opium farmer!"

"Father," said Gesina, "let mother go, and listen to me, I will tell you all about it."

"You!" roared her father without releasing his wife whom he still kept kneeling before him.

"I took the parcel from Lim Yang Bing," continued the young girl. "It was I who opened it, and we all admired the samples of silk. At that time, I swear to you, father, there were no notes in it. I swear it by all that I hold dear! When mother refused to listen to his conditions, he put the parcel back into his pocket. Later on, mother consented to speak to you about Lim Ho and to consult you about the silk, then, the babah flung the parcel on the table and hurried away."

"But the ten thousand guilders!" cried Meidema impatiently.

"Let me finish what I have to say, father," continued the young girl. "As soon as he was gone I again took up the samples. And now I come to think of it, they were not the same we had admired before. At the time, however, I did not notice the change. I took one of the samples and spread it on my knee to bring out the effect of the colours, and then—the notes fell out of the packet to the floor."

"Fifteen thousand guilders!" said the father who had been listening with impatience but had not lost a word.

"No, father, not fifteen thousand; there were ten five hundred guilder notes. There were no more than that," replied the girl in a firm and steady voice.

"Is that the truth?" asked her father as he fixed his eye on his wife and children.

But there was so much honesty and innocence in the eyes of his twins; and his wife looked up at him so firmly and trustfully, that further doubt was impossible, while all three as with one mouth and in one breath said:

"That is the truth."

Then the wretched man raised his wife from the floor where she was still on her knees before him. He clasped her in his arms and, as he pressed her to his heart, he cried in a lamentable voice:

"My God! my God! I am a miserable wretch! I have dared to suspect my darlings—the only ones I love upon earth!"

And, stretching out his arms, he flung them round the neck of his wife and children as sobbing, he cried: "Oh, my dearest ones, can you ever forgive me?"

Standing thus, the four formed a group which would have charmed a sculptor; but which must have filled with rapture the heart of any true friend of man. The wife, the daughters, overwhelmed the man, who a moment before had so brutally treated them, with kisses and caresses. Oh, they could so well place themselves in his position—they could so well understand why he had been blinded by passion!

"Was I not right?" said Matilda, "when I feared that the parcel boded us no good."

"But do tell me, Meidema," asked his wife, "what can have happened that has so terribly unnerved you?"

"That beastly Chinaman," he cried, "actually declared in the Resident's presence that he had given you not five but fifteen thousand guilders."

"Good God, how infamous!" exclaimed Mrs. Meidema.

"Infamous, yes most infamous! but what can one expect from a wretched speculator in opium? Such a fellow as that is capable of any infamy."

"But," asked the anxious mother, "may not all this do you a deal of harm?" She had some little insight into the intrigues carried on in Dutch India.

"Yes," sighed Meidema, "no doubt it will. If I had to do with honest people, it would not trouble me much; but now I—However, I must see what I can do. My carriage is still at the door—I am off straight to the Resident."

* * * * *

"That's a queer story of yours, Mr. Meidema."

Such was the only remark which Mr. van Gulpendam thought proper to make when Meidema had most indignantly given him a full account of what had occurred. While he spoke, the Resident had been sitting most attentively listening to his words; but the expression of his countenance showed no sign of sympathy. Now and then there was even a slight motion of impatience and an incredulous smile. That studied indifference and almost insolent smile exasperated the already overwrought Assistant Resident to such a degree that, when at length his superior officer made his most unfeeling remark, he could not help crying out with indignation:

"A queer story you call it, Resident. You mean, I suppose, a most infamous business!"

"He, he, he! Mr. Meidema, not quite so fast if you please."

"But, Resident, what do you mean—Do you not then think it a most infamous business?"

"Oh, yes, most certainly I do; but the question is for whom?"

"For whom? Is that the question, Resident? Then it appears to me you do not believe me."

"Don't be in a hurry, Mr. Meidema, just listen quietly to me."

"But, Resident, this is a matter which demands an instant explanation. If you do not take my word—"

"Now, Mr. Assistant Resident, I beg you will allow me to speak."

These words Mr. van Gulpendam uttered with that measured tone of voice, and with that dignity which only a Resident knows how to assume. They brought about an immediate and entire change in his subordinate's demeanour. Meidema at once mastered his excitement, he replied not a single word; but only bowed in sign that he was ready to listen.

"I said just now," began the Resident, "'a queer story' and now I repeat the words—Yes, it is a very queer story, a very queer story indeed. I will for a moment suppose, Mr. Meidema, that you are an honest man."

The Assistant Resident gnashed his teeth and writhed with inward passion at the insinuation; but he uttered not a sound. He had made up his mind, outwardly at least, to retain his composure, and to listen in silence.

Without appearing to notice Meidema's evident anguish, the Resident continued:

"I am ready to admit, for argument's sake, that you are an honest man; but I think you yourself must allow that appearances are terribly against you. Just put yourself in the position of a Resident; put yourself in my place. I am bound by my office to inquire into these matters calmly and impartially, without fear or prejudice, and, I must add without sympathy either; and then just see on what side probabilities have been accumulating. It is known to everyone, that you are in serious money difficulties—that is an open secret—and, I must tell you, that in your public capacity as chief magistrate, that common report is most injurious to you. When a man is in grave pecuniary difficulties, it is almost impossible to make the public believe that he can be impartial, inaccessible to bribes and strictly honest. The temptations, you see, are too great. On the one side there are tempting offers, which always manage to find a way for themselves, on the other there are the claims of his family, claims which have a powerful voice, and which clamour to be heard. Public opinion, therefore, needs must be against you. Under these painful circumstances, the opium farmer comes to your house and offers presents, in the form of silk dresses, to your wife and daughters, and he offers further a considerable bribe in the tangible shape of money. Now, do you think that you can make anyone believe that all this could occur without there having been some previous relations between you, some quiet understanding to encourage such barefaced proposals? Surely not! You have told me with your own lips that the opium farmer came to invoke the aid of your wife. Therefore, he must have had some good cause to believe that not only could her aid be purchased; but also that her intercession, when obtained, would be of some value to him. Now, if you are compelled to grant me all this—why, then I say that you can hardly wonder if I come to the conclusion that she was not to-day solicited for the first time. At all events, you must allow that an impartial judge might very easily come to that conclusion. Now this is not all, there is yet another point to be considered. You have yourself confessed that, at least for a time, you yourself believed Mrs. Meidema guilty. Your description of the scene—the deplorable scene—which has just now taken place at your house, amply proves that. And, let me say in passing that I most strongly disapprove of such want of temper and of such want of self-control in my subordinates; but that in the particular case which I have now before me, I am willing to excuse it. However, as I was saying, the scene of which you gave me so graphic a description, amply proves that you yourself did not consider Mrs. Meidema above suspicion."

Poor Meidema! He sat there before the pitiless inquisitor, pale as death, motionless as a statue. His bloodshot eyes gazed stonily at the Resident who, with a kind of refinement of cruelty, seemed to delight in probing his wound to the quick. At that moment the wretched man sat there accusing himself more bitterly than van Gulpendam or any one else on earth could have done. The voice of conscience is, to the upright man, the most terrible voice of all. Yes—it was but too true, he had been guilty of suspecting the wife of his bosom, he had thought evil of his two innocent daughters. The Resident was pitiless; but he was quite right. And then, alas! that was not the worst of it; his conscience had a still louder reproach to make. He had been so miserably weak that he had not been able to keep that foul suspicion to himself—he had not been man enough to keep it locked up in his own bosom. Honest and loyal as he was himself, he had fancied that the truth—the whole truth—would have proved the strongest bulwark for innocence. Thus, in a moment of blind honesty, he had, for no other purpose than to bring out more strongly the innocence of his family, betrayed to his enemy the excess of violence into which his wild frenzy had led him. And now, the weapon to which he had fondly trusted for his defence, had turned in his hand; not against himself only, but also against those dear ones of whose perfect purity he had no longer the faintest shadow of a doubt. The thought was too terrible to bear, it was maddening—his eyes began to ache as though a red-hot iron were pressed upon them. But, unmindful of his sufferings, his pitiless tormentor quietly continued:

"From all this must we not then reasonably conclude, Mr. Meidema, that your wife, terrified—and very naturally terrified—at your unreasoning violence, must have confined herself to a simple denial after she had attempted to mislead you in the matter of the ten thousand guilders? You see," continued the Resident with a friendly smile, "after all, the best thing is, that we should give that aspect to a most lamentable occurrence; one cannot very well hold you responsible for the actions of your wife."

At these words Meidema could restrain himself no longer. "No!" shouted he, "that suspicion shall not be cast upon her—my wife is innocent!"

"Mr. Meidema," said van Gulpendam, in tones of mock sympathy, "let me implore you to take my advice, and to consider well what you are about. Once you let go that anchor, I have no other alternative than—"

He paused, even he seemed to hesitate, even he recoiled from what he was about to say.

"No other alternative than—what?" asked Meidema, with something of the listlessness of despair.

"Than to consider you the guilty man and to hold that your family are in conspiracy with you."

"Resident!"

"Be calm, pray be calm! Remember it is not I who choose the alternative—you yourself force it upon me. Once again, let me remind you of your financial difficulties; let me remind you of the animosity which, in your report, you plainly show to Lim Ho. In that paper you eagerly seize upon every little circumstance which can possibly be adduced to prove him guilty; and you as carefully avoid everything which might point to Ardjan as the culprit. In fact you screen the Javanese in every way you possibly can. Taking all these things into consideration, the words spoken just now by the opium-farmer must needs give us food for reflection. You remember what he said, do you not? His words were blunt and cruel, I admit; but he seems to have had justice on his side. 'He wants,' said the Chinaman, 'to keep for himself the greater part of the present which I offered to the njonja, and he intends in addition to secure the fine which Lim Ho will have to pay if he be found guilty.' A fine which we know could not be screwed out of Ardjan. And when, in connection with those words we come to examine the 23rd clause of the Opium Act, why, then I do not think that many words will be needed to convince you that you must not venture to reckon upon either my sympathy or my support."

Meidema, poor wretched man, was utterly crushed and annihilated. Without uttering a sound, he sat vacantly staring at his chief.

"No, no," continued van Gulpendam, "I can see no alternative. Either you are guilty or your wife is guilty, perhaps both are equally culpable. You have, however, still time to make a choice; it is not yet too late, but that choice must be made quickly, now, at once; for I have made up my mind to telegraph to headquarters this very day."

To telegraph! Poor Meidema only heard the one dreadful word "telegraph." He knew well what that word implied; he knew well in what an arbitrary and off-hand way the fate of subordinates is decided at Batavia. Already he saw himself dismissed and disgraced, shunned as a social leper by every respectable man; his wife and children wandering about in poverty, exposed to hunger and untold misery. Just then, as if he had been able to read the unhappy man's thoughts, the Resident said: "Come, Mr. Meidema, decide, make up your mind, there must be no delay."

"What must I do, Resident?" moaned the poor man, now fairly at his wits' end.

"What must you do? It is clear enough what you have to do. There is your report; it has just been handed to me along with the other papers relating to the business of the Court at which on Tuesday next I intend to preside. Take it; here it is; do with it what you will."

He thrust the document into Meidema's hand—who took it, gazed at it for a moment with meaningless stare, then made some gesture with his hands as though he would tear it up; but—before he could accomplish the fatal deed, his brain seemed to whirl and he fell heavily to the ground.

A doctor was sent for at once. When he made his appearance, he found Meidema lying back in a chair surrounded by the entire household of the Residence, but utterly unconscious; and all around the floor was strewed with fragments of paper.

The physician spoke of brain fever, and he ordered the patient to be removed to the hospital.

"There is no danger, I hope, doctor?" asked the Resident, in tones of the deepest sympathy.

"My dear sir," replied the medical man, "there is the very gravest danger. It is a very sad case, it will surprise me much if the man does not go mad—that is if he gets over this attack at all."

The Resident thereupon at once drove off to break the fatal news as gently as possible to Mrs. Meidema.

The evening papers contained the following paragraph:

"We are grieved to state that Assistant Resident of Police, W. D. Meidema, was this morning suddenly taken seriously ill. It seemed at first as if he were suffering from some acute form of brain fever; but after careful examination, our zealous and able medical officer has come to the conclusion that it is a case of 'melancholia attonita.' It is his opinion that no relief can be hoped for unless the patient be at once removed to Europe. There he will probably have to pass a considerable time in some asylum in which he can have the care which his peculiar malady requires. If we are rightly informed, our Resident at once telegraphed to Batavia; so that it is probable there will be no delay in obtaining the necessary leave of absence. Mr. van Gulpendam has further exerted himself to the utmost in obtaining a passage to Europe for the sorrow-stricken family in the Noah III. which is to sail for Patria on the day after tomorrow. Mrs. van Gulpendam also is untiring in her attention, and entirely devotes herself to assist the afflicted family by word and deed. Both the Resident and his wife have once again shown how cordial is their sympathy with their subordinates, and how thoroughly they have their welfare at heart. Our best wishes accompany Mrs. Meidema and her children, and we heartily pray that the Assistant Resident may speedily be restored to health."

The correspondent had been well informed. This much is certain, that on the 14th of July the ship Noah III. left her anchorage, and under the influence of the Eastern monsoon, left the harbour of Santjoemeh and was quickly out of sight.

Van Gulpendam had, in the overflowing kindness of his heart, accompanied his *friends* to the ship's side. He had warmly pressed Mrs. Meidema's hand and uttered the kindliest sentiments at parting. Then, when the ship was but a speck on the horizon, he uttered a deep sigh of relief, and with a pleasant smile, he muttered to himself: "Come, I have managed that pretty neatly."

CHAPTER XXVII.

SUMMUM JUS SUMMA INJURIA. FATHER AND SON CONDEMNED. MURDER OF SINGOMENGOLO.

A COUPLE of days later, Mr. Zuidhoorn left Santjoemeh. He started for Batavia in one of the Dutch Indian Navigation Company's ships, intending to take a passage to Singapore in the Emirne. From Singapore he was to go to Marseilles in the Irrawady of the Messageries Maritimes. He was, as we have seen, a thoroughly honest man; and he had fully made up his mind to let the authorities at Batavia know all that had occurred at the last session in Santjoemeh. He intended to act in this matter as prudently as possible; but yet was resolved that the officials at the head-quarters should be fully informed of the shameful intrigues that were carried on in the interior. But—between the forming of a good resolution and the carrying out of it, there is a vast difference, as Mr. Zuidhoorn was soon to discover.

He had but three days to stay in Batavia, and he found that he could not, in these three days, obtain an interview with the Governor General. Mr. Zuidhoorn had taken the trouble to go all the way to Buitenzorg; but it was only to find that, on the very day of his arrival, his Excellency had, in the early morning, started for Tjipannas. The only thing, therefore, that he could do was to wait till the morrow, and then take a carriage and drive to that place. Mr. Zuidhoorn took the precaution of telegraphing to the adjutant on duty, and as he received no answer to his telegram, he started the next morning for Tjipannas. He was doomed to be once again disappointed; for when he arrived, he was told that, unfortunately, His Excellency the Governor was confined to his room by a severe attack of fever, and that no one could be admitted to his presence. The aide-de-camp made this announcement with a profusion of excuses, and tried to explain that he had not been able to send a reply to the telegram because His Excellency had not been taken ill until late in the night.

There was no help for it, and Mr. Zuidhoorn had to hurry back, as best he could, to Batavia; cursing his unlucky star. But in these fruitless efforts to gain the Governor's ears, two precious days had been wasted, and he had but one left.

On the following morning Mr. Zuidhoorn called upon the Chief Justice. This gentleman received him with a cordiality which was somewhat too boisterous to be real.

"Here you are at length, my dear Zuidhoorn!" cried he, as, with much outward show of friendship, he grasped his hand. "Indeed, I am delighted to see you! I have been alarming myself so dreadfully about the state of your health, that it is a positive relief to see you as well as you are. I thought your indisposition was much more serious. I am glad to find you are not so very bad after all; but it is getting high time for you to go away for a bit and get a little rest."

Mr. Zuidhoorn did not know what to make of all this. "You thought me very ill?" he asked in surprise. "What do you mean? I don't remember, in any of my letters, that I represented my state of health as worse than it really is. And then 'high time to get away?' I assure you I do not understand what you mean. I was not at all anxious to leave."

"I suppose not," rejoined the Chief Justice, "I suppose not; but I know you are beginning to feel the effect of the climate."

"Of the climate?" repeated Zuidhoorn still more puzzled.

"Yes! yes! you see, when we Europeans are forced to live in the tropics for any considerable time, then, in some cases, nervous debility begins to set in, frequently accompanied by weakening or softening of the brain—"

"My dear sir," cried Zuidhoorn, "your hints—"

"Are not in the least applicable to you! My dear Zuidhoorn, I know that as well as you do; but pray let me finish what I was going to say. Some men, I observed, begin to suffer from debility and impaired brain-power—others grow nervous, excitable, irritable—"

"Chief Justice!" cried Zuidhoorn, "is that the case with me?"

"As a rule," continued the other without noticing the interruption, "as a rule the patient is, in such cases, wholly unconscious of his condition; and is under the impression that he continues to speak and act precisely as he was always wont to do."

' Is such the case with me?" again asked Zuidhoorn, repeating his question.

"Well, yes, my dear colleague, I am sorry to say that, to a certain extent, it is. You yourself are not aware of it, of course: but yet to your friends the style in which you write has, of late, betrayed a degree of irritability which you, as an excellent *juris peritus*, know is scarcely desirable in a high legal functionary."

"But my dear sir!" exclaimed Zuidhoorn, "I am not at all aware—"

"*Quantum est quod nescimus!*" interrupted the other.

"Well," continued Zuidhoorn, "it is a very curious thing that no one has ever dropped the slightest hint to me of any such infirmity."

"True enough, my dear colleague; but nevertheless it has been noticed for some little time. At first I looked upon it merely as a result of the extreme interest which we know you take in the discharge of your duties. But it soon became evident to your friends that it was a symptom of failing health: and, as you know perfectly well, in our profession especially, it is of the utmost importance that there should be *meus sana in corpore sano.*"

Mr. Zuidhoorn was utterly amazed, as well as fairly disgusted. Was that then the impression which his long and conscientious services had made upon his superiors at head-quarters? Was that the reward for the many years of anxious work which he had bestowed upon his office?

"But, my dear sir," said he, "you will, I suppose, not object to give me a single instance in which that supposed infirmity of mine has manifested itself to you?"

"A single instance! my worthy friend, why! I will give you ten, twenty if you like!"

"I ask you but for one," was Zuidhoorn's reply.

"Very well then," said the Chief Justice, "look at that recent business of the Santjoemeh sessions."

"Which sessions?" asked Zuidhoorn.

"Ah, you see! you have a kind of inner consciousness that there are several occasions on which—"

"That is the merest quibble!" cried Zuidhoorn, somewhat testily, "the merest quibble! I have attended at, and presided over, so many sessions, that my question is, surely, a very natural one."

"Well, I will tell you," replied the other, "I am alluding to the affair with Resident van Gulpendam."

"Who would persist in presiding over the trials, which he had no right whatever to do."

"Come, come, my dear friend," said the Chief Justice, "you must be losing sight of clause 92 of our Judicial regulations. But, I ascribe that want of memory to your mental condition."

"Pardon me," interrupted Mr. Zuidhoorn warmly, "the condition of my mind has nothing whatever to do with it. You said clause 92?"

"Precisely so," replied the Chief Justice, "that clause confers upon the Resident the power of presiding at any session which may be held within his district, should he think it right and proper so to do."

"I know that," answered Zuidhoorn, "but pray remember, that when that 92nd clause was in force, there was as yet no thought of appointing specially qualified lawyers to the presidential office. At that time such a regulation may have been useful and even necessary; but, as matters stand now, it would be an utter absurdity for any Resident who is a layman, to put aside the specially appointed president in order to thrust himself upon a court of justice in the capacity of chairman. Methinks that—"

"Mr. Zuidhoorn, allow me to say, that we judges ought to be the very first to show strict respect to the written law. Certain rules and regulations may appear useless or even mischievous; but so long as they remain in force, we are bound to abide by them. And—pardon me the question—have you in this particular case acted up to that principle?"

"It seems to me then," said Zuidhoorn, "that you do not approve of my line of conduct?"

"Not only do I disapprove of it," replied the Chief Justice, "but the Governor General also is extremely annoyed at the attitude you have chosen to assume in this case. In his opinion the line of conduct you have thought it right to adopt has seriously impaired the prestige which ought to belong to your position."

"Oh, indeed! is that his Excellency's opinion?" asked Mr. Zuidhoorn musingly. "Now I begin to see why I have not been admitted to an audience."

"Have you tried to obtain one?"

"Yes, I have," was the reply. "The day before yesterday I went to Buitenzorg—yesterday I went on to Tjipannas—"

"And—?"

"I was told by the aide-de-camp on duty that his Excellency was ill in bed and could see no one."

"You see!" exclaimed the Chief Justice. "What did I tell you?"

"But, my dear sir," interposed Zuidhoorn, "the most scandalous proceedings are going on. For the sake of shielding a wealthy opium farmer, a poor devil of a Javanese—!"

"Has been falsely accused—and will in all probability, be found guilty in spite of his innocence," remarked the Chief Justice with a cynical smile. "Oh, yes, we know all about it, you have put the whole question most clearly and most circumstantially before us. But what are we to do? We are powerless, and must bend our heads to the storm. You know *summum jus, summa injuria.*"

Mr. Zuidhoorn was leaning his head on his hand as his colleague spoke thus; and was vacantly, almost hopelessly, staring before him.

"Let me give you a friendly piece of advice, my dear colleague," resumed the Chief Justice kindly; "the fact is you are not at all well—you are more seriously indisposed than you yourself are aware of. To-morrow you mean to sail in the Emirne, eh? Very well, my advice to you is to leave all these worries and bothers behind you in Batavia; fling off all these anxieties, and go to Europe to recruit your failing strength. In a couple of years' time you will return with fresh vigour—a new man, in fact, in mind and body—and then you will for many years to come continue to be an ornament to a profession in which, allow me to tell you, very few can compete with you. And now you must excuse me. My time is very precious and— Oh, yes, one other recommendation let me give you before taking leave. For the future, pray take the greatest care never to meddle in any way, if you can possibly help it, with any of the complications and intrigues of the opium trade. I need hardly tell you that it is an *imperium in imperio* and, to this I may add, *malum malo proximum;* in all such matters, he who touches pitch must be defiled. And now—I can only wish you a quick and pleasant voyage and a happy time in the old country. Good-bye, my dear Zuidhoorn, good-bye. A pleasant journey to you!"

The two cases of opium smuggling, the one at the Moeara Tjatjing and the other arising out of the discovery in the hut of Pak Ardjan at Kaligaweh, did not come on at once before the court at Santjoemeh. Resident van Gulpendam was delighted when he heard from the Chief Justice at Batavia, that, owing to the scarcity of legal men at head quarters, there was no chance whatever of filling up, for some time to come, the vacancy caused by Mr. Zuidhoorn's departure.

The sittings of the court at which the Resident now had to preside, were held, as usual, regularly once a week; but Mr. van Gulpendam found no difficulty, on one pretext or another, in putting off the hearing of the opium cases from week to week.

At length, however, the chief djaksa had informed him that the two Chinamen, Than Khan and Liem King, who had been on watch in the djaga monjet, could nowhere be found. Presently it was found that Awal Boep Said, the captain of the schooner brig, Kiem Ping Hin, on whose testimony Ardjan chiefly relied, had also disappeared without leaving a trace behind him. Then van Gulpendam thought that the proper time had come to bring up the prisoners for trial.

Ardjan had to confess that on the February night in question, he had come ashore in very stormy weather; that the boat of the Matamata had chased him and had fired upon him; but he was quite unable to prove that the opium discovered, not far from the spot where his surf-boat was driven ashore, had not been landed by him. Thus all the evidence was against him. Then he called upon Dalima to prove that she was seated with him in the boat. The president, however, assured the court that the girl had not, on that night, left the grounds of the Residence, and that her testimony, therefore, must be a mere tissue of falsehood and of no value whatever—that it could not in any case invalidate the evidence already produced. The Resident further drew the court's attention to the fact that Dalima herself was about to be put on trial for a precisely similar offence—a fact which could not but affect the weight of her testimony. The court thus came to the conclusion that it was perfectly useless to call so tainted a witness. Moreover the chief djaksa deposed that Pak Ardjan, the prisoner's father, had confessed that the smuggled opium which Singomengolo had found in his cabin, had been supplied to him by his son. Thus the guilt of the prisoner was clearly established and Ardjan was, accordingly, found guilty of an attempt at smuggling one and a half pikols of pure opium which was equivalent to about three pikols of raw material. This brought the case under the 23rd clause of the Act, and the court condemned him to three years' penal servitude, and further to pay a fine of three thousand guilders. In default of payment, he was to have three months' compulsory labour on the public works for every hundred guilders. Ardjan was, therefore, doomed to what virtually came to eight years' penal servitude. The poor victim of this gross miscarriage of justice gnashed his teeth with impotent rage when he heard the sentence. Could he have expected more lenient treatment at the hands of the white men? Perhaps he had, poor fellow!

After the son, the father—after Ardjan, Pak Ardjan.

His case was treated in a still more off-hand manner if possible, than his son's.

The prisoner had confessed that he had smuggled opium in his possession. Entrapped by artful cross-examination; and without having the slightest suspicion how heavily his testimony would weigh against his son Ardjan, he had admitted that the latter used, from time to time, to supply him with the drug. He had further been forced to confess that he had wrenched a sword from one of the oppassers and, in consequence of the fellow's grossly indecent conduct towards his little daughter, had dealt the wretch a couple of slashing blows with his own weapon. But hardly any notice whatever was taken of these extenuating circumstances—they were, in fact, not inquired into at all. The wretched father was there and then found guilty of having illegally in his possession two katties of opium. As this was his first offence, he could only be sentenced to forfeit the captured wares and to undergo three months' hard labour. But on the other charge, that namely, of having offered resistance to the police and of having wounded one of the officers in the execution of his duty, he was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude.

Thus father and son were both satisfactorily disposed of. The latter, though perfectly innocent, was sent to penal servitude for eight years. The former, for a very simple offence, for which only a trifling penalty could be inflicted, had not the infamous conduct of the searchers driven him to resistance, was sent to penal servitude for ten years. The Chief Justice at Batavia fixed upon Atjeh as the place where the culprits should serve their time; but—before the order could arrive at Santjoemeh—both Ardjan and his father had managed to make their escape.

It was an awful night, dark as pitch, while a terrible thunderstorm had burst over Santjoemeh. The young native soldier who was on sentry-duty inside the outer wall of the prison, had been driven to seek for shelter within his sentry-box, terrified by the flashes of lightning, the deafening claps of thunder, and the torrents of rain; when, suddenly, he felt an iron grip upon his throat. Before he had time to utter a sound, a blow from a heavy piece of wood stretched him senseless on the ground. Meanwhile the thunder kept on rattling and the rain came splashing down with redoubled fury—such rain as is only seen in the tropics. Of these circumstances, so favourable to their flight, the fugitives made the best use. Nimble and strong, as a good sailor must be, Ardjan was able to help his father to gain the top of the wall, then he soon managed to clamber up himself. Once firmly seated, he lowered the old man to the ground on the other side, and, in a twinkling, he was at his side. Not one of the sentries on duty outside the wall was to be seen, they also, in such dreadful weather, had got under cover. The rain still poured down in torrents, and the water was coursing over the plain beyond and dashing down the streets as if all the rivers in the country had broken their bounds. Outside the prison wall all was darkness. One solitary oil-lamp was flickering in a lantern; but it only shed a sickly and feeble light in its immediate neighbourhood, while its wretched little glimmers served but to make more palpable the darkness beyond. Just at the moment when the fugitives had safely reached the foot of the wall, there came a blinding flash of lightning, cleaving its zig-zag way through the clouds. The flash was followed immediately by a stunning clap of thunder with that peculiar crackling sound which tells that the lightning has struck something close by, and then another noise was heard—it was that of a mighty cocoa nut palm which split from top to bottom, came crashing to the ground.

The two Javanese then left the shelter of the wall where they knew that the rounds might at any moment discover them; and, taking advantage of the dense darkness which followed upon the dazzling flash, they darted across the small plain in which the prison stood, and, in a few moments, had reached the edge of the dessa.

Once there, they were perfectly safe, for not one of the inhabitants of the dessa would have thought of betraying the victims of the detested opium tyranny to the vengeance of the white man.

When Resident van Gulpendam was informed of this escape, he was simply furious.

One of the sentries stated that, after the fall of the palm-tree, he had heard a sound as of something splashing in the water; but the darkness made it impossible for him to distinguish what it was, and he thought it must be some dog who was trying to get away from so dangerous a neighbourhood. The Resident at once ordered the man to be tried by court-martial, and had him punished with fourteen days' close imprisonment.

The most careful search was made to discover the fugitives. All the detectives, all the spies, all the creatures of the opium police, were turned out, and used their utmost skill; but all to no purpose. For months the entire district of Banjoe Pahit, especially the dessa Kaligaweh, was carefully watched; the wife and children of Pak Ardjan were not lost sight of for a moment; but without result. At length the police were driven to the conclusion that the criminals could not have returned to Kaligaweh and that they must, in fact, have left the residence of Santjoemeh altogether. Presently men ceased to talk about the matter, and soon the whole business was clean forgotten; when—a couple of months later—an event took place which, while it recalled the occurrence to men's minds, gave them at the same time ample food for reflection.

On a certain evening Singomengolo had come to Lim Yang Bing and had told him that he thought he had found a trace of the fugitives; but, as he feared some of the information he had gained might leak out, he refused to give any further explanation. He requested, however, that he might, for that evening, have the assistance of two of Lim Yang Bing's men; and he picked out two Chinese bandoelans to accompany him on his voyage of discovery. The opium farmer tried all he knew to get at Singomengolo's secret. He questioned and cross-questioned him; but he could get nothing out of him. The bandoelan persisted in saying that he could hope for success only by keeping strictly secret the clue he had obtained. He further said that he was not at all certain that the information he had gained was genuine; and that he might very possibly be on a wrong scent altogether. The only thing he allowed to slip out was that the field of his operations lay not far from Kaligaweh. As soon as he had obtained the help he required, Singomengolo started off with his two police-spies; but he did not return. When on the following morning, the

opium farmer heard that his trusty servant had not yet come home, he began to grow anxious. He was so used to see his bandoelan at a stated hour in the morning, to receive from him a report of all that had occurred during the twenty-four hours, and to give him his further orders, that the man's want of punctuality on this occasion gave him no little alarm. On that morning especially, he had been impatiently awaiting Singo's usual visit, as he was extremely curious to know what success had followed the night's expedition. He waited and waited with still growing impatience until noon. Then, the suspense becoming intolerable, he called for his carriage, and drove straight off to the Residence.

"What is the matter now, babah?" cried van Gulpendam, greatly surprised at the manner of his visitor, who seemed to have lost all the calmness and composure which are so very characteristic of his nation.

"Kandjeng toean," hurriedly said Lim Yang Bing, "I come to invoke your aid!"

Thereupon he told the Resident what little he knew of Singomengolo's expedition, and could not hide the anxiety which the bandoelan's prolonged absence caused him.

For a few moments the Resident sat reflecting on what he had heard. He had received, from one of the landowners at Banjoe Pahit, secret information which was of a very disquieting nature. A hint had been conveyed to him from that source, that very probably Banjoe Pahit would be threatened by a visit from certain bands of robbers. The hint was, however, so very vague and had apparently so little to support it, that he had not paid much attention to it. The new controller, whom he had appointed in the place of Verstork, and to whom he had imparted the information he had received, assured him that the district was profoundly quiet, that the population was as orderly and contented as it could possibly be; and that not a single alarming symptom could be discovered. True it was that the land-tax came in somewhat slowly; but, on the other hand, other sources of revenue were decidedly improving, and, judging from the flourishing state of the opium den at Kaligaweh, the bidding at the approaching sale of the monopoly would run unusually high. This report was eminently satisfactory to the Resident, and though he knew perfectly well that the foundation upon which the controller had built his pleasant expectations, was an extremely crazy one; for in such matters it was not an easy thing to deceive the keenly practised eye of van Gulpendam, yet he was quite ready to accept it as sufficient, because he reckoned upon the report as a convenient screen under which to hide himself should matters turn out not quite so satisfactory as his subordinate would make them appear. He had, therefore, written to the landowner a most polite letter in which he thanked him for his information; but in which he at the same time told him that he had reason to think his fears were unfounded, adding that for the future, it might perhaps be advisable not to spread such alarming reports. Strange that, as Lim Yang Bing was telling his tale, these vague rumours of possible disturbance had come up spontaneously to the mind of the Resident, yet so it was. Very probably van Gulpendam could not have explained the fact to himself.

Why should the rather late return of Singomengolo—for, as yet, there was no ground for giving his absence any other name—why should that have any connection with those faint rumours of robber bands which had not shown the slightest symptom of having any substantial foundation? No, no, that was out of the question. Van Gulpendam accordingly tried to calm the Chinaman's fears.

"But, babah," said he, "surely you have no reason for all this uneasiness. It must, I should think, be no uncommon occurrence for a bandoelan to be delayed for some time on a secret mission.—"

"No, kandjeng toean," was the reply, "not Singomengolo. He always takes his measures so carefully and lays down his plans so accurately, that he never fails to be with me at the appointed time."

"Well, babah," asked the Resident, "in what manner can I assist you?"

"All I want," replied Lim Yang Bing, "is for you to give me a few oppassers and your written authority to call upon the dessa people to lend the police any assistance they may require."

"But," persisted van Gulpendam, "what do you want the oppassers and the dessa people to do?"

"I wish," said the Chinaman, "thoroughly to search Kaligaweh. I don't know how to explain it, kandjeng toean; but I have a kind of presentiment that Singomengolo has fallen into some trap and has met with foul play."

"Very good," said van Gulpendam, "so be it, I have no objection."

A few hours later, a numerous band of men was searching Kaligaweh in every direction; but no discovery was made that could throw any light upon the matter. The dessa people were preparing to go home, and the policemen were getting ready to return to Santjoemeh, when a fisherman came up and told them that at Kali Tjatjing he had seen something which looked like three dead bodies. Thereupon the search was at once resumed, and, under the fisherman's guidance, the police proceeded to the spot he had mentioned. At length under a thickly tangled clump of mangrove, quite close to the river bank, they found the bodies of Singomengolo and of one of his Chinese followers. Both bodies were covered with wounds; and so fearfully hacked about with the kris, that death must have been almost instantaneous. The third Chinaman still showed some signs of life when they found him. He had a dreadful gash in the throat; but if it had been attended to at once he might possibly have survived. Loss of blood, however, had now made his recovery hopeless. When the party of searchers reached him he opened his eyes feebly, and muttered some disconnected words. He tried to say something about men with blackened faces, and some of those present thought they could distinguish the name of Ardjan, then, uttering a deep sigh, the man expired.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE departure of Verstork for Atjeh, seemed to have drawn more closely together the little band of friends which, after the boar-hunt in the Djoerang Pringapoes, we saw so cosily seated around the hospitable board at Banjoe Pahit. The loss of one of their number had strengthened rather than weakened their mutual feelings of friendship. We said the loss of one of their friends; but in this case that is hardly the correct word to use; for, though William Verstork was far away, yet he continued to dwell in the memory of them all, and he was perpetually the subject of their conversation. It was, however, not only that affectionate remembrance which held the friends so closely united. Letters were continually passing between them, and Verstork was kept well informed by hi friends at Santjoemeh of all that concerned themselves privately, and also of the events which form the subject of our story, and in which they all played a more or less prominent part. Edward van Rheijn had, under the influence of van Gulpendam, for a time grown somewhat cool towards his friends; but when he began to gain a deeper insight into the real character of the Resident, and began to see with what cynical selfishness he turned everything to his own advantage, his feelings towards his friends became as warm as ever they had been before. He wrote a long letter to Verstork about his successor at Banjoe Pahit, in which he showed him how mischievous and destructive was that man's influence in the formerly thriving district. Everything, he said, was rapidly going to ruin, the rice-culture was being woefully neglected, and the second crops shared the same fate. Breach of contract was now an almost daily occurrence, inasmuch as the once so orderly and industrious population, was fast getting lazy, listless, in fact utterly unfit for any regular work whatever. In one word, the entire district was visibly deteriorating, and could look forward to nothing but a future of crime and misery. On the other hand, the opium den, the gambling hells and the pawn shop, were in a most flourishing condition, and produced large incomes to the farmers of those sources of revenue to the Dutch treasury. In order to satisfy the inordinate passion for gambling and for opium, smuggling was rapidly on the increase, and theft was of daily occurrence; nay, there were even ugly whispers of robber bands, which were said to have been organised, and to have already begun their criminal operations.

Van Rheijn concluded his letter with these words: "The bandoelan Singomengolo—You remember the scoundrel who was present at the dreadful Amokh scene at Kaligaweh, and who afterwards arrested baboe Dalima—has been found murdered close to Moeara Tjatjing, and two of his Chinese followers have shared his fate. I have every reason to believe that this crime had nothing to do with robbers; my opinion is that it was a pure case of revenge; for on the bandoelan's body there was found the sum of sixty-eight guilders, and this plainly enough shows that robbery could not have been the motive of the murder. There is another very remarkable circumstance in this case, and it is this: Besides the money, I told you of—there were found on him five small copper boxes, which are precisely like the two little boxes you took possession of at Kaligaweh, and in the Djoerang Pringapoes. Indeed, I must tell you that I am now beginning to see what a fearful curse the opium trade is to the country. I make that confession the more freely to you, as you recollect, no doubt, that some little time ago I had not made up my mind on the question. Such, in the few months of your absence, has become the condition of Banjoe Pahit; and—to fill up the cup of misery—a rumour is now current that the land-tax is to be raised, and that the other already existing taxes are to be exacted with much greater severity; while, at the same time, fresh burdens will be heaped upon the shoulders of the natives. In one word, money grabbing in every possible shape and form, in the form of compulsory labour, in the form of duty on salt, in the form of import and export duties, in the form of opium dens, of gambling booths, in the shape of pawn shops,—everywhere extortion, the most open and shameless!—everywhere the last bitterly earned penny wrung out of the poor wretched Javanese. William! William! where must all this end? I can foresee nothing but calamity—there must come a crash. It may come sooner or, it may be, later; but come it must. For the condition of Banjoe Pahit is by no means exceptional. It may much rather be looked upon as typical of the state of the entire island of Java."

August van Beneden wrote to his friend to tell him all that had occurred with regard to the impending trials of the Javanese Setrosmito, and of his daughter baboe Dalima. He wrote as follows:

"Just fancy, William! The Government have thrown all kinds of obstacles in the way of my appearing as defending counsel in these two cases. You will hardly guess what reasons are given for this opposition. The objection is, that perhaps I might have to be called as a witness in both cases. It was a rather clever dodge; but, as you may suppose, I stuck to my point. The whole question has been submitted to the Judge Commissary of the court of Santjoemeh; and, when I had declared that I had witnessed nothing, and that therefore my testimony could not be called for, after I had formally stated that I had no pecuniary interest whatever in the matter, and had consented unconditionally to abide by his decision, the Judge withdrew his opposition, and permitted me to plead in both cases. But he further said that, should I be unexpectedly called as a witness, he could not allow me to be sworn.—And now, William, pray attend to the reason which he gave for that decision. He could not allow me to be sworn because, although I am undertaking this defence gratuitously and do not expect to receive any fee; yet, as defending counsel, I must be looked upon as having an indirect interest in the acquittal of my clients, and am not, therefore, in the eyes of the law, a perfectly independent and unbiassed witness! Now what do you think of that? I freely admit speaking as a man and as a lawyer that the decision is correct, quite correct; but, what if that principle were to be applied to all witnesses that appear in court? Would not the testimony of all the bandoelans, the opium-hunters, the opium-den keepers, '*et hoc genus omne*,' much rather lie open to suspicion? It is an admitted fact that all these men speak under the direct dictation of the opium farmer, and that, moreover, owing to the rewards which the law allows them, they have a most direct and material interest in procuring convictions. Oh, William! our entire legal system—and especially our treatment of the natives in opium cases—is most lamentably deficient.

"The charges against Setrosmito and baboe Dalima will be brought before the native court, and it is but very seldom that counsel are heard there. It is my intention, therefore, to appear as counsel only in the case of Setrosmito. With regard to Dalima, should she be found guilty, she will have an appeal to the Superior Court at Santjoemeh, and then I shall have to conduct her defence with as much vigour as possible. You may ask perhaps why make that distinction between the two cases? Listen to me, and bear in mind that I am acting under van Nerekool's advice.

"You have probably heard that Singomengolo, who in both trials was to have been the principal witness, has been mysteriously murdered. At first I thought that his removal was all in favour of my clients; but I have since ascertained that the chief bandoelan has left behind him a sworn deposition of all the facts, and that it will be received as evidence by the court. Thus his death is a positive and serious injury to our cause, inasmuch as we cannot now confront him with Lim Ho, and with the defendants. I fully expected to have been able to lead them into a long and angry discussion, in the course of which, I have no doubt, that several facts would have come to light, which would have enabled me to prove that the father committed the crime of which he stands accused, under the most extenuating circumstances; and clearly to bring out the absolute innocence of the daughter, and the brutal violence to which she has been subjected. Now, however, we are in a very different position. At the preliminary inquiry before the Judge Commissary, Mrs. van Gulpendam has stated that she was quite unaware of Dalima's absence from the house on the night in question; and thus the girl now lies under very serious suspicion of having left the grounds of the Residence for an improper purpose. You remember, of course, that on the morning of our boar-hunt she appealed to the fact of her having received leave of absence both from the njonja and from nonna Anna. Whereupon you asked her whether these ladies would bear witness to that fact. You recollect also that she at once replied in the affirmative. But you will ask perhaps: 'How about Miss van Gulpendam?' Well, William, that is another very mysterious business! The common report is that the Resident's daughter has gone to Karang Anjer on a visit to the Steenvlaks. But, no sooner had the inquiry about Dalima begun, than the Resident said that his daughter had gone to Europe, and that she intended to stay for a while with an aunt of hers who lives in Switzerland. But the most curious circumstance is that in the lists of passengers of all the ships which have, within the last few months, sailed for Europe, the name of Miss Anna van Gulpendam can nowhere be found. You know how inquisitive are our gossips at Santjoemeh—Well, the public—that public which sees everything, hears everything, and pries into everything—has made every possible endeavour to find out what may have become of Miss van Gulpendam; but without the slightest success. The Resident has been pressed on the point by many an indiscreet busy-body, and he treats the whole thing in a very light and airy way. He has concocted some tale to the effect that his daughter, in company with two English ladies, left by a boat from Tjilatjap, that she started for Port Adelaide, and from thence intends to take the mail-boat to England. Not a soul, of course, believes a word of the yarn, which is all the more apocryphal from the fact that the father has never yet been induced to mention the name of the ship in which the young lady is said to have sailed. Some anxious souls amongst us have actually gone the length of telegraphing to Acraman, Main, and Co. of Adelaide, and the answer they received was:—'We know nothing of the arrival of three ladies from the Dutch Indies.'—Van Nerekool is frantic, that you may well suppose. A few days ago he was talking about going to Karang Anjer to inquire after his lady-love, for whom he has still the deepest and warmest affection. He has been there and has returned as wise as he was before. He will, I have no doubt, write to you and tell you, poor fellow, all about his adventures. I rather fancy, indeed, that he has done so already. The sum total of all this is, my dear William, that my clients' affairs are in a very bad state; but I do not despair. I shall do my very utmost to save the poor creatures. To spur me on to further exertions, I have the fact that poor Dalima is, as the saying is, in an interesting condition; so that the consequences of Lim Ho's detestable misdeed are already showing themselves. Will this circumstance be of any use to me at the trial? I doubt it much. We have no legal proof of the outrage and, therefore, I think it will be best for all concerned to hush the matter up as much as possible. All right-minded men, however, are moved with the deepest sympathy for the poor girl; and should she be discharged, or after she has left the prison, will be ready to protect her. She will need all the support she can get; for, after her father's condemnation, she will be homeless, and, disgraced as she is by van Gulpendam's assertions, she will not be able to get a place anywhere either as baboe or in any other capacity. However, time brings counsel!"

It was a letter from Grenits which brought Verstork news of the double escape of Ardjan and his father from the jail at Santjoemeh, and told him of the consternation which that event had spread in official circles. The young merchant wrote to his friend, and said:

"The Resident tries to appear perfectly indifferent to the escape of the prisoners, and whenever it is talked about treats the matter with much unconcern. But it has been remarked with what feverish anxiety the fugitives have been pursued. I can assure you that, when the regular police were at fault, the whole army of opium-spies was pressed into the service. But since Singomengolo and two of his Chinamen were found murdered—and murdered too without having been robbed—the very gravest anxiety has been felt; and a report was current that the guard at the Residence had been doubled. There is not a word of truth, however, in that rumour, and I can positively deny it. The two sentries, as usual, march up and down before the door of the high and mighty one; but the officer who commands that honourable corps of civilian soldiers has assured me that the cartridge box in the guardroom at the Residence has not even been unlocked. A good job too; for if those heroes should begin to fire ball-cartridge, loyal and peaceful citizens will be in considerably greater peril than the offenders. But, for all that, I am heartily glad that the fellows have got clear away. Their escape may not be legally justifiable; but a most grievous piece of injustice has thus been partially rectified. The father was driven to his reckless deed by the brutal conduct of the police towards his children, while the son had no hand whatever in the opium smuggling with which he was charged. You know that perfectly well, and the public knows it as well as you do. My own little affair with Mokesuep will now very shortly come before the high court of justice. The case is an extremely simple one. I have admitted that I did give the fellow two good slaps in the face, and my confession has been confirmed by the evidence of the man himself, and by that of Lim Ho and of Grashuis. Acting on van Beneden's advice, I have not pleaded any extenuating circumstances; because we do not wish to bring up poor little Dalima's name. The doctor has given a formal certificate to the effect that no outrage has been committed, and thus there is no possibility of legally proving the offence. And yet we are all of us morally convinced that a gross outrage was perpetrated, but—when shall we see justice dealt out fairly in India?"

It was, however, van Nerekool's letter which made the deepest impression on Verstork, though he had read the other communications with very great interest. The young judge told his friend all about Anna van Gulpendam's sudden disappearance and what had taken place since she left. He said:

"I have done all I could possibly do to meet her again; but to no purpose. Not only have her parents taken every precaution to make a meeting impossible; but Anna herself was determined not to see me again when I had at length persuaded Mrs. Meidema to let me know when I might expect to find Anna at her house. Now she is gone—and I received a letter from Sapoeran; but, my dear friend, it is a letter which robs me of all hope. She writes: 'My union with you is utterly impossible, you cannot, you must not think of making me your wife after the infamous proposals which have been made to you. You will say, perhaps, that a child is not guilty of the actions of her parents and cannot be held responsible for them. In that you are perfectly right, and I must tell you that my conscience is as clear; and that, if in my present forlorn condition I may be allowed so to speak, I, at this present moment hold up my head as high as before I knew anything of my mother's designs But to be always face to face with the man to whom the odious propositions were made, to be ever conscious, even in our tenderest moments, of the fact that I was flung to the man I love as the price of dishonour, that is a prospect which is to me utterly unendurable. You are a gentleman, and as such, you would no doubt always have treated my parents with deference and with the proper show of respect; but to know that all this must be a mere empty show, put on in deference to a daughter's natural affections,—Oh Charles! that would have made life an intolerable burden to me, and must in the end, have destroyed your happiness also.' William, my dear friend, these lines sounded to me so full of despair, while at the same time they are so full of love, that they made me the happiest and, at the same time, the most wretched of men. I can fully enter into her feelings—I can understand her deep disgust at the actions of her parents; and it is for that very reason that I now, if possible, love her still more ardently than before. Her noble character stands clearly revealed in every word of her letter and commands my respect and admiration. I often ask myself how can such a child have sprung from such parents? It must be by a freak of nature that two such depraved creatures could have begotten so noble a child. How is it possible that amid such surroundings Anna has remained spotless and pure? To us who hold the cynical opinion that with our mother's milk we imbibe our mother's faults, it is an insoluble enigma. But, you see William, all this only serves to increase my affection for the lovely girl who happens to have crossed my path of life. What will be the end of it all? That is a question I often seriously put to myself; but I can find no answer to it. There are moments when I recoil from my very self; for I am beginning to discover within me certain feelings which I hardly dare to analyse. Are these feelings to be accounted for by the obstacles which my love to Anna has encountered? Would they ever have arisen in my breast if the course of my love, like that of so many of my fellow-men, had run smoothly along? I cannot tell; for the ideal which once I formed of married life is so strangely different from the storm which now rages within me, that I sometimes cannot repress a painful smile when I call to mind my visions of days gone by. Then woman was to me an ethereal being rather than a companion of flesh and blood who can herself feel the passion she inspires. You know, my dear friend, how little, hitherto, I have been accessible to what is called love. Well, now I am a different man. At times I feel as if a burning fire were consuming me. There are moments when painful yearnings arise within me for that pure and lovely being, for that proud maiden, whose very chastity and purity attract me with irresistible power. She flies from my love—and, oh William! I confess it to you though I confess it with shame—that there are moments in which I not only long to make her mine, but in which I madly swear that at any price she shall be mine. And then—alas that I should have to say so—in this storm of passion there is nothing tender, nothing sentimental; but it is simple passion which masters me, the mere selfish and senseless raging of the grossly material man, who is prepared to fling himself, by force if need be, upon the object which he has determined to obtain.

"After the receipt of that last letter I have repeatedly written to Anna. Again and again I have told her of my love. I have conjured her not to trample upon my affection. I have begged, I have entreated, I have prayed her not to refuse me her hand. Her parents would surely not persist in rejecting me; my worldly prospects might improve; indeed, I let her know that, as far as mere money was concerned, she need have no anxiety whatever; for that one of my mother's sisters had left me, not indeed any very considerable sum, but yet a competence. I told her that I must succeed in getting an appointment far away from the abode of her parents, and that, if life in India was really unbearable to her, we could cross the sea and go to Australia; that we might there marry and live quietly and forgotten by all, yet happy in our mutual affection. All this I wrote, and a great deal more; but, my dear friend, I received not a single word in reply. Regularly my letters have been returned to me and always unopened. Then I began to see that her determination was not to be shaken. With her own hand she enclosed my letters in an envelope and with her own hand firmly and boldly wrote the address. There could be no mistake about it; it was indeed her own handwriting. What was I to do? What could I do? I was in the most excited frame of mind; yet the huge mass of arrears with which the courts at Santjoemeh are overloaded would not allow me to ask for even a single day's leave of absence. I felt that I must get away—that I must fly to Karang Anjer; for I was persuaded that even yet I might induce Anna to look with less coldness upon my love. At length my last letter was returned to me unopened as all the others had been. As I held it in my hand a strange feeling of dread seemed to come over me for—the address was not in Anna's handwriting. Hastily I tore open the cover. Yes, there was my letter, unopened, and upon it were written these few hurried words: 'Anna van Gulpendam has left Karang Anjer!' You may perhaps be able, William, to understand my feelings as I read the words 'Anna has left Karang Anjer!' and not another syllable to give me a clue as to where my darling then was. Who could have written those few words—it was certainly not Anna's hand, that I could see at a glance. But who could it be? Was it a woman's hand at all? The writing was regular, the letters were fairly formed; but they told me nothing. One thing I felt quite distinctly, namely that, at any cost, I must get to Karang Anjer or else anxiety and suspense would kill me. The only question was, how to get away. You know that my superior officer in the High Court of Justice is a friend of van Gulpendam, and thus I knew I could not venture to ask him for leave of absence. I am glad I did not, for had I done so, I feel convinced that every one of my steps would have been watched. Happily, however, help came from an unexpected quarter. I became seriously indisposed. Congestion and feverish attacks made me wholly unfit for work, and though I was not forced to take to my bed, yet the doctor was so uneasy about the state of my health, that he insisted upon my starting at once for the hills; for, he declared, immediate change of climate was the only remedy for my complaint. You may imagine my feelings of joy when I heard this. I said, however, as quietly as I could, 'Well, doctor, is there any particular spot to which you advise me to go?'

"'I fancy,' he replied, 'Salatiga will be about the best place; it lies pretty high up, 1800 feet I think.'

"'Would not Wonosobo do just as well?' I asked, with assumed indifference.

"'Have you any preference for that place?' he asked.

"'Oh no,' I replied, 'not exactly a preference; but the Assistant Resident there is a friend of mine and I know several of the landowners in the neighbourhood. At Salatiga I shall be quite a stranger and must feel very lonely.'

"'Well then by all means,' said the doctor, 'go to Wonosobo. In fact it lies up higher still, quite 2200 feet, that will be still better for you.'

"The necessary certificate was soon signed, and in two days I was seated in a travelling carriage and was off on my way to the hills. Wonosobo, as you probably know, is 73 miles from Karang Anjer; but what were they in my eyes? Was it the hope which began to dawn within me, or had a reaction already set in? I cannot tell; but this much I know, that from the very commencement of my journey, I felt as if fresh life had been infused into me. In any other frame of mind the trip would have been highly interesting; for the country through which I passed was enchantingly lovely. I traversed the mountain district of Prahoe which is quite 8000 feet above the sea-level; then I went through the Dieng plateau, that classical volcanic region which the German naturalist Franz Junghuhn has so graphically described. My road then took me along Goenoeng Panggonang and Goenoeng Pakoeodja with their still active solfataras and their springs of boiling water; along the Telerep, that shattered old volcano whose very appearance testifies of eruptions and convulsions which defy description; along the Telogo Mendjer, the deep crater-lake inbedded in walls of rock and offering one of the loveliest basins in the whole world. Then further along the western slopes of the Goenoeng Lindoro, the fairest and most symmetrical volcano in Java which rises to a perpendicular height of fully 10,000 feet above the sea-level; and thus, at length, I arrived at Wonosobo. But for all this I had no eyes. I passed unmoved by all these marvellous beauties of nature, which in the shape of pyramids, of jagged mountain-ridges, of steep and towering rocks, of dashing mountain torrents, of thundering cataracts, of magnificent lakes, of green table-lands, of picturesque valleys, of dizzy ravines, of deep, dark precipices, of hoary forests, of delightful coffee and tea plantations, moved before me like some wondrous and ever varied panorama. One only thought possessed me: Anna! and I had but one object in view, namely, to hurry on as quickly as possible and to get to the end of my journey.

"'Come coachman, drive on, drive on!' was my only cry to the Automedon who certainly did his best and plied his long whip with merciless dexterity.

"But when I arrived at Wonosobo my impatience was far from being satisfied.

"The kindest reception awaited me, and the Assistant Resident had prepared for my entertainment on the most liberal scale. You know the family Kleinsma, so I need enter into no details. The journey had the most beneficial effect upon my health; but yet I had to allow several days to pass before I could safely venture on a trip to Karang Anjer. I made use of my stay to tell my host something, at least, of the state of my affairs. I explained to him that I was most anxious to avoid observation and to keep away from Poerworedjo the capital of that district.

"'Indeed,' said Kleinsma, 'you will find that no easy matter. In that case you will have to go by way of Kaliwiro, Ngalian, Peniron and so to Karang Anjer.'

"'Will that take me far out of my way?' I asked, thinking that he was alluding to the length of the journey.

"'Not at all,' was his reply. 'On the contrary you will by that road cut off about one third of the distance; but you cannot travel in a carriage. Our roads about here are very good; but in the interior you can travel only on horseback. You will moreover have to take a guide; for the roads cross one another and form so intricate a web, that it forms a very labyrinth and, even the most accurate map would hardly save you from losing your way altogether.'

"That prospect however could not deter me. I passed eight days in that beautiful climate, and then, when all feverish symptoms had left me, I undertook the journey which was, in truth, a rather perilous one. The horse which Kleinsma had procured me was a stout Javanese mountain nag, and, in spite of the difficult nature of the ground, he always managed to get along at the rate of about six miles an hour. When the road lay up the mountain, the good beast would take to galloping without my having to use whip or spur. When the path ran downhill, if the descent was not too steep, he would keep up a decent trot or a good fast walk. At Ngalian I changed horses and obtained a still better mount than my former one. Thus I got over the Besser mountains, over the spurs of the Midangang and of the Paras and Boetak hills, and, at four o'clock in the afternoon, I reached Karang Anjer.

"Alas! William, all this trouble proved in vain. I could gain no information about my dear Anna. I intend to let you know all about my disappointment on a future occasion; for the present, I have not the courage to go on."

CHAPTER XXIX.

AT KARANG ANJER. AN ACQUITTAL.

YES, it was true enough, all poor van Nerekool's trouble had been absolutely in vain.

When he got to Karang Anjer he found in Mrs. Steenvlak a most amiable and highly accomplished lady, who, in her husband's absence, received him most kindly and hospitably; but who, as regards Anna van Gulpendam, refused to give him the slightest information.

The young lawyer did his very best—he questioned and cross-questioned his hostess; but he had to do with a shrewd and clever woman who was quite able to hold her own, and would give him no direct answers. Most amiable Mrs. Steenvlak was no doubt; but he could get no information out of her; and all her replies to his oft-repeated questions left our despairing lover in the greatest perplexity. He begged and entreated, and she listened to him with the most unwearying patience, she showed even the deepest sympathy for his distress; but nevertheless nothing could move her to divulge anything.

"Yes," said she, "Anna has been staying with us for the last few weeks, and I am happy to say, Mr. van Nerekool, that I succeeded in becoming her friend, and in obtaining her confidence. I will tell you further, that in her despair, the poor girl has told me everything—you understand me, do you not, when I say everything? She has told me of your mutual affection, and she has also shown me the barrier, the insurmountable barrier, which must for ever keep you apart."

"Madam!" cried van Nerekool in dismay at her words.

"And," continued Mrs. Steenvlak, "I am bound to tell you that I think the dear girl is right in every word she says. Of a marriage between you and her there cannot possibly be any further question; not even if you could succeed in winning the full consent of her parents. Utter misery for both of you would be the inevitable result of so foolish a step. Anna is, in my opinion, quite right when she maintains that a woman must have an unsullied name for her dowry."

"But, madam!" passionately cried van Nerekool, "Anna is blameless and pure!"

"I am speaking of her name, Mr. van Nerekool, not of her person. A man must be able to pronounce his wife's name without having to blush as he mentions it. Her parents must possess his esteem, and they must be worthy of his respect. If those conditions do not exist then, for both man and wife, existence must soon become intolerable. It must become so to him; for he will always have to be carefully on his guard, weighing every word he speaks or leaves unspoken; and this restraint soon must banish all real confidence between them. Every heedless expression, on the other hand, would inevitably inflict a wound upon her, and, in the most innocent utterances, she needs must see some hidden meaning. In fact, under such circumstances, no compromise is possible."

"But, Mrs. Steenvlak," insisted van Nerekool, "I have proposed to Anna that we should leave Java altogether and go to Australia, to Singapore, or to any other place she might prefer. There no one would know the name of van Gulpendam, and we might live only for one another—and—and, I believe that our love would enable us to forget the dreary past, and thus a compromise might very easily be possible. As far as I am concerned no single word would ever drop from my lips which would allude to the past—I know how deeply any such hint must wound her, and, believe me, I love her far too dearly to inflict upon her the slightest pain."

"Oh yes, Mr. van Nerekool, of that I have no doubt whatever; but, you see, that very silence, that very reticence on your part would be most painful to her; and it would ultimately become too great a restraint upon you also—you could not possibly bear it. But, for the matter of that, I must tell you that, with respect to your letters to her, she has never told me a single word."

"How could she do so?" asked van Nerekool, "all my letters have been returned to me unopened."

"I am glad of it," replied Mrs. Steenvlak, "there again Anna has acted most wisely; and in acting thus she has spared herself, and you too, much useless sorrow. Every communication from you, every effort on your part to remove the existing obstacles between you, could only be most painful, and could not possibly lead to any good result."

"Madam!" cried van Nerekool.

"You said, for instance, just now, that you have proposed to Anna to go to Singapore, and to be married there. But, just consider, how could you have undertaken that journey? Separately? I do not suppose that you could intend so young a girl to undertake such a journey alone. Together? You feel at once how such a proposition would have wounded her modesty and her feelings. No, I am glad indeed that she had the courage not to read your letters."

"But, Mrs. Steenvlak," said van Nerekool, adopting another tone, "supposing that I were prepared to accept the present circumstances as they are?"

"What can you mean?" asked Mrs. Steenvlak in some surprise.

"Supposing," continued he, "that in spite of her parents, in spite of all that has occurred, I should be prepared to make her my wife?"

"Mr. van Nerekool," replied Mrs. Steenvlak very seriously, "do not speak so wildly I pray. In spite of her parents! That must mean that you are prepared to accept all the consequences such a step would entail. In other words, that you are prepared to show her parents that respect and that esteem which they could justly claim from you as their son-in-law. But do you not see that by thus acting you would be making yourself contemptible in Anna's eyes?—you would be taking away the last support the girl still has to cling to in her exile. Believe me, the cruellest blow you can strike a woman of her nature, is to prove to her that she placed her affections on one unworthy of her. The unsullied image of him whom once she loved—whom she perhaps still fondly loves—gives her, in spite of the obstacles which separate you from one another, the best consolation in her sorrow. And that pure remembrance will be to her, together with the consciousness of having acted strictly in accordance with her duty, her chief support in a lonely life."

As Mrs. Steenvlak was speaking, Charles van Nerekool had covered his face with his hands. At her last words however he sprang up from his chair, he took her hand and said:

"A lonely life you say? Oh, do tell me where Anna now is. I will go to her, perhaps even yet I may succeed in winning her—tell me where to find her!"

"Mr. van Nerekool," rejoined Mrs. Steenvlak, very quietly, "do not, I pray you, try to do any such thing. She has given me her fullest confidence, and I do not intend to betray it. She has told me every detail, she has consulted me about the line of conduct she ought to adopt; and in all she does she has my sanction. Do you think that I would throw fresh difficulties in her way? You surely cannot wish me to do so."

"But," cried van Nerekool passionately, "what does she intend to do—what kind of plans has she formed?"

"She simply intends henceforth to live forgotten."

"Perhaps to mar—!" cried he.

"My dear sir," hastily interrupted Mrs. Steenvlak, "do not pronounce that word, I forbid you to do so. In your mouth such a word conveys a foul calumny. She has refused your hand—she will never marry another."

"But what then does she intend to do?"

"I have told you," replied Mrs. Steenvlak, "she intends to live in perfect solitude and oblivion; and thus she wishes quietly to await death, which, she hopes, will soon release her from all her troubles."

"She is ill then?" cried he in dismay.

"No, she is not ill," replied Mrs. Steenvlak; "but such a trial as she has gone through is not at all unlikely to impair a young girl's health; and may very probably shorten her life."

"Madam," cried van Nerekool, "your words are torture!"

"I am telling you the simple truth."

"Oh tell me—where is she?"

"Never," was the quiet reply.

"Is she in Java? Is she in India?'

"I will not give you the slightest clue."

"Has she gone to Europe? Oh, I beg and pray you, have pity upon me and deliver me from this fearful suspense?"

"I will tell you nothing at all. Do you understand me, Mr. van Nerekool? nothing at all."

"Can I not in any way move you to pity?"

"No, Mr. van Nerekool, I intend to remain true to my word and, moreover—"

"But, madam," interrupted van Nerekool vehemently, "you must take pity upon my wretchedness!"

"Moreover," continued Mrs. Steenvlak calmly, "I feel certain that in acting as I am doing, and in keeping absolute silence, I am preventing much future misery."

"You are hard, you are pitiless!" cried the young man in despair, as he rushed from the house. For a couple of days longer he stayed at Karang Anjer, at the house of the regent of that dessa who entertained him with the utmost hospitality.

He cross-examined his host. "Yes—he knew nonna Anna well. She had frequently, in company with the njonja, called upon his wife; but she had gone away without letting anyone know where she intended to go to. His wife and he thought that she had gone back to Santjoemeh."

The unhappy lover kept wandering about the neighbourhood, making inquiries everywhere. He tried to obtain some clue from the loerahs, from the overseer, from the postmasters round about; but nowhere—nowhere—could he obtain the slightest information. Either these people really knew nothing, or else they were obeying orders and would tell him nothing. This seemed to van Nerekool most likely, as he heard at a certain posting station that no one could tell where the young lady had gone. During his wanderings he sat down at many a guard house, and again and again he put the same question: "Could anyone tell him where to look for the young European lady?" But it was only to receive the same answer over and over again, "No, sir."

In his distress and perplexity, he at length left Karang Anjer and went to Tjilatjap, for he wanted to find out whether there was any truth in the report which van Gulpendam had so assiduously circulated, namely that his daughter had gone to Europe. Very luckily for him the regent of Karang Anjer possessed a travelling carriage which he placed at the disposal of his guest. This was a most fortunate thing for van Nerekool; for he would otherwise have had to travel the fifty-two miles to the harbour on horseback, and, in his desponding frame of mind, the fatigue of so long a journey might have had the most serious effect upon his health. The road from Karang Anjer to Tjilatjap lies on one continuous plain which is but very little above the sea-level, while the hills which rise close to the Indian Ocean run north and south, thus preventing the free circulation of land and sea breezes and rendering the atmosphere exceedingly oppressive and stifling.

When van Nerekool reached the harbour, he found that there also he could obtain no tidings. Neither the assistant resident of that place, nor the harbour-master nor any of the agents of the steam Navigation Company—nor, in fact any of the other shipping agents, knew anything about the departure of a young girl to Australia or to any other country. For months past no strange ship had sailed from that port; and the boats of the India Navigation Company which run to Australia, do not go along the South coast of Java but get into the Indian Ocean by the Bali straits. It was evident, therefore, that van Gulpendam's tale of two ladies under whose escort Anna travelled to Europe, was a merely trumped-up story.

Weary and sick at heart, van Nerekool was forced to return to Wonosobo by way of Bandjar Negara. There he stayed for a little while longer, and when, in that magnificent climate, he had almost entirely regained his health and strength, he went back to Santjoemeh where he found his friends, August van Beneden, Leendert Grashuis, Theodoor Grenits and Edward van Rheijn anxiously waiting to welcome him home.

"Well?" was the question of all of them as soon as they had made inquiries after their friend's health, "well?"

The question alluded of course to his inquiries, for the anxiety and the efforts of van Nerekool had remained no secret among them.

"Nothing!" replied van Nerekool fetching a deep sigh, "I have found out nothing, not even the faintest clue."

"No more have I," added Grenits.

"You?" asked Charles in surprise.

"Yes," rejoined the young merchant. "I also have been at work. I have made inquiries amongst all the commercial men in Dutch India; but from all sides I have had but one answer. 'No young girl in any way corresponding to the description of Miss van Gulpendam has started from any of the shipping stations.'"

"You think therefore—?" asked van Nerekool.

"I think that Miss van Gulpendam has not left Java at all."

"But where on earth can she be then?" cried van Rheijn.

"God only knows!" sighed van Nerekool.

"But her parents?" observed Leendert Grashuis, "we can hardly suppose that a young lady of her age could have thus disappeared without consulting her parents."

"No," said van Rheijn, "especially as we know that Resident van Gulpendam is not exactly the papa to play tricks with."

"Yet," rejoined van Nerekool, "I am of opinion that neither the Resident nor his wife have the least idea where Anna now is."

Thereupon he told his friends all about his conversation with Mrs. Steenvlak; and when he had given them a detailed account of all that passed between him and that lady, he concluded by saying, "She only could give us the information we want if she would."

"If that be so," remarked van Beneden, "we ought to search in the neighbourhood of Karang Anjer."

"I have done so," was van Nerekool's reply, "I have most minutely searched the entire district. I have questioned everybody whom I considered in the least likely to know anything about her movements; but all my inquiries have ended in nothing."

"Well, Charles," said Grashuis, "in that case I can see nothing for it than to leave the solution of the mystery to time."

"To time!" sighed van Nerekool, "I suppose you are right; but, my dear friends, I am most wretched and most miserable."

"You must get to business and, by hard work, seek to divert your thoughts," said van Beneden. "I can assure you that your absence has not diminished the arrears of work at the Court of Justice. At all events, brooding over your troubles can do no good whatever."

"Well," replied van Nerekool, "to work then. God grant that hard work may have the effect you anticipate."

"That reminds me," remarked Grenits, "that to-morrow I shall have to appear in court."

"You? what for?"

"Don't you remember Mokesuep's business?"

"Oh, aye, for the cuffs you administered to that scoundrel!"

"That will mean eight days for you, friend Theodoor," observed van Beneden, "eight days at least of seclusion. Well, that's not so very formidable after all."

August van Beneden was not very far wrong, for the court condemned Grenits to ten days' imprisonment and to pay a fine of twenty-five guilders for the assault, which, though it had led to no serious consequences, was no light offence, inasmuch as it had been committed on the person of a witness in a case of opium smuggling. The sentence would probably have been much more severe; but the court made allowance for the natural feelings of indignation called forth by the shameful conduct of the opium police towards a defenceless young girl, at which the plaintiff Mokesuep had been present without interfering to protect her from insult. No sooner had the sentence been pronounced, than every hand in a crowded court was stretched out to Theodoor Grenits, while Mokesuep was shunned like some venomous reptile. The public did not look upon the punishment in the light of a degradation at all; and Grenits became the hero of the hour. A few days after this, baboe Dalima's case came on before the native court at Santjoemeh.

The Javanese girl most emphatically denied that any opium had been found in her possession, she even swore that she had not been searched for any such object. She gave a very simple and unvarnished account of all that had taken place; but the testimony of Mrs. van Gulpendam and that of Mokesuep contradicted her assertions. The former handed in a written statement to the effect that she had not given the baboe leave to spend the night outside the Residence; but had only given her permission to start on the next morning, and that she had, in fact, set her a pretty heavy task of needlework to finish before going. Mokesuep swore that the girl's story was a fabrication from beginning to end, that she had violently resisted the search for opium and had bitten Lim Ho's ear as he made an attempt at holding her hands. That, in this struggle with the bandoelan, her dress had become torn and deranged, and that she might very probably have received a few scratches, but that there had been nothing resembling the outrage of which she accused Lim Ho.

The medical officer also was examined, and he maintained that there could have been no such assault as the girl complained of; he spoke only of some slight abrasions which had occasioned a trifling loss of blood.

In all this evidence the demoralising influence of the opium farmer could plainly be seen; but however conscientious might have been the new president who now occupied Mr. Zuidhoorn's place, the evidence must have compelled him to dismiss the complaint lodged by Dalima against Lim Ho.

The court, therefore, proceeded to deal with the charge of opium smuggling of which the baboe stood accused.

The deposition left by the murdered bandoelan Singomengolo was positive enough. It stated most distinctly that, hidden in the folds of her sarong and under the waistband, he had found a box full of opium. That the box in question had been delivered to Controller Verstork and had been sealed up by him. That the contents had been examined and were found to consist of eight matas of opium of coarse and blackish appearance, and of a sourish smell, and that, therefore, it could not have been obtained from the opium farmer in a legitimate way.

But, when the little box was produced in court and was shown to Lim Ho, he hesitated for a while, and at length said that the struggle which was going on prevented him from actually seeing Singomengolo produce the box and that, moreover, his ear was very painful, and he was at the time busy in trying

to staunch the blood. He could not, therefore, declare that he had seen the box at all until Singomengolo handed it to Verstork. It thus appeared that the man, though a vile scoundrel, was not wholly devoid of better feelings.

Not so, however, with Mokesuep. When he entered the witness-box, bound by his oath to utter nothing but the truth, he did not for an instant scruple to say that he had actually seen Singomengolo discover the box hidden in the girl's clothing; and in giving his evidence he entered so minutely into detail and gave so graphic a description of the poor girl's struggles, that he fairly disgusted all present. Very ominous murmurs of disapprobation arose among the crowd. This went so far, that at length the president had to interfere, and to request the witness to confine himself strictly to the facts, as all such embellishments and elaborate descriptions were clearly superfluous.

The chief-djaksa appeared as public prosecutor, and, as this was Dalima's first offence, he demanded that she should be condemned to three months' hard labour.

August van Beneden however stood up for the defence, and drew the attention of the court to the fact that the small box which had been produced, was precisely similar to that other one which the bandoelan pretended to have discovered in the hut of Setrosmito the defendant's father. He further mentioned the rather strange coincidence, that, on the body of Singomengolo, after his murder, a number of other little boxes were found, all precisely similar again to that produced against Dalima. He called the coppersmith from whom the bandoelan had procured these boxes, and this man swore that Singomengolo had bought twelve of them from him, at the price of seven guilders.

August van Beneden took advantage of this man's evidence to remind the court of the dodges and tricks which all opium hunters were well known to employ in order to secure the conviction of any one they might accuse. Finally he altogether disputed the authority of the individuals who had testified to the nature and value of the opium. The document they had drawn up as containing the result of their examination, he rejected as absolutely valueless; inasmuch as it was the work of Chinamen who were no chemists at all; but had come to the conclusion that the drug could not have been obtained through the regular channels, simply on the evidence of colour, taste, and smell. He pointed out that, as a general rule, the worst opium smugglers were the farmers themselves, and that, in hardly any two cases were their wretched mixtures alike. In fact he defied even the most expert chemist to establish anything like perfect similarity between two different decoctions of the same farmer.

The young advocate was completely successful; and the court at Santjoemeh declared that the charge against baboe Dalima had not been satisfactorily established, and therefore acquitted her. She was set at liberty there and then, and the treasury was ordered to pay the costs of the prosecution.

The verdict was hailed with thundering applause, and the public became so demonstrative that the president had peremptorily to call for silence. Mokesuep left the court amidst looks and gestures of the most profound contempt and much hissing and hooting. He got into his carriage as quickly as he could and immediately drove off. It was evident that the public was well aware of what had taken place in the hut by the Djoerang Pringapoes, and that everybody knew the odious part Mokesuep had played in the transaction.

The trial was no sooner over than a crowd of well-wishers surrounded the unfortunate Javanese girl. Every one could plainly enough see the painful situation she was in, and pitied her accordingly. Had the law allowed further inquiry, Lim Ho might have found himself in a difficult position; but as no legal remedy existed, the public showed the greatest sympathy towards his victim. On all sides she received congratulations on the happy issue of her trial, on all sides she heard kind words and friendly offers. Van Nerekool, Grenits, Grashuis, van Rheijn, and van Beneden, were of course close to the poor creature who, though deeply moved by the sympathy she received, yet could not refrain from shedding tears of sorrow as she thought of her blighted youth. Van Nerekool proposed to place her in the house of an aged couple where she might be sure of the kindest treatment in return for such services as she could render to the mistress of the house. Dalima heartily thanked the young judge for his great kindness; but she told him that she intended to take up her abode with her mother until after the event she was expecting. The poor girl was a genuine child of nature, and felt no false shame as she spoke of her misfortune. She took that opportunity, however, to gain some information about nonna Anna. But, as we know, Charles van Nerekool could tell her nothing more than that her young mistress had spent some time at Karang Anjer, and

thereupon had disappeared without leaving any clue as to her whereabouts.

"Karang Anjer? where is that?" asked Dalima, musingly.

Van Nerekool gave her the necessary directions, and then he proceeded to join his friends whom Grenits had invited to his house to drink a glass together in honour of van Beneden's victory. It was getting somewhat late in the day and the sun's rays darting down almost perpendicularly made the heat most oppressive; but a good pair of horses soon brought our friends to Grenits' door.

Glad enough to get under cover, they all rushed in, and Grenits at once cried out to his servant, "Sidin, get us some fizz quickly!" and a few moments after the young men were congratulating van Beneden on his well-merited success in a glass of sparkling Veuve Clicquot.

After the first burst of excitement was over, and when they had begun to discuss somewhat more calmly the incidents of the trial, a feeling of disappointment began to prevail.

"Is it not enough to make one despair altogether of the future of our fair Indian possessions," cried Grashuis, "when we come to think that we are sitting here congratulating one another on the issue of such a case as this? Every single person, including even the members of the court itself, is convinced that poor little Dalima is the victim of a most detestable outrage and yet, not only does the real culprit escape scot free; but the innocent girl herself was very near being found guilty, and punished for a purely imaginary offence! Could such a thing ever have happened at home? There must be something radically wrong in our entire colonial system."

"I will tell you in one word," replied Grenits, "where the mischief lies, it is the abominable opium trade which is at the bottom of all this, which overrules and demoralises everything out here. You heard the head-djaksa's prosecution? Did you ever see anything more neatly put together? Did you notice how cleverly all the witnesses who might have spoken in Dalima's favour were got out of the way? Verstork sent to Atjeh, Miss van Gulpendam smuggled away somehow or other, while Mokesuep did not fail to put in an appearance."

"The brute!" muttered van Rheijn.

"Yes," continued Grenits, "and if it had not been for our friend August, that poor girl would have been found guilty as so many others have been who have been falsely accused of opium crimes. Just now you asked, Leendert, whether any such thing could possibly happen in Holland. I do not take upon myself to say what may be possible or impossible there; but this one thing I do know, that our whole opium-system is derived from thence, that year by year the opium revenue keeps on rising by several millions; and that thus the passion for opium is, by every possible means, excited to its utmost pitch. I further know that our Government and our Government officials are thus compelled by the authorities at home to support the opium farmers and to wink at all their dirty tricks with their attendant train of fatal consequences. Is it not enough to make one hide one's head for shame when we come to think that we belong to a nation whose sordid love of money and grasping avarice not only tolerate such a state of things, but actually fosters and encourages it?"

All present shook their heads and sighed; for the words Grenits uttered were the simple truth.

"But," inquired van Rheijn, "ought we to blame the nation for all this? Ought we not rather to find fault with the Government which countenances such abuses?"

"The Government!" impatiently exclaimed Grenits, "a nation always deserves the Government it has. Yes, of course, it is the Government which issues the orders and which acts; but the nation looks on and—is loud in its praises of a minister who can boast that he makes as much out of the business as can be squeezed from it. It seems to me that the Dutch people have either lost their manliness altogether or else are on the verge of idiocy. It has no eye, no heart for its colonies, no feeling whatever, nothing, only one single thought: 'that minister balances his budget admirably!' And then the minister, feeling certain of success and applause, actually in his place in the House allows himself to perpetrate jests which an ordinary individual would be ashamed to utter in a pot-house. Then his friends applaud and the legislature seems to consider his jokes a very pretty exhibition of wit."

Fortunately, however, at this moment Sidin came in, and his appearance checked the young merchant's indignant flow of words, a thing which his friends might not have found it easy to do. The Javanese servant held two formidable looking letters in his hand, which he offered to his master.

"By Jove," cried van Rheijn, "two official letters! I bet you that it is the order to send you to jail."

Grenits made no reply, but quietly opened one of the letters.

"Only a very commonplace marriage announcement," said he when he had glanced at the paper; and then, when he had looked at it again, he cried out:

"I say, boys, here's fun! just listen to me:—'Mr. and Mrs. Lim Yang Bing and Mr. and Mrs. Ngow Ming Than have the honour to announce the approaching marriage of Mr. Lim Ho, son of the former, to Miss Ngow Ming Nio daughter of the latter. The marriage ceremony will take place on the third of September next, and a reception will subsequently be held at the residence of Mr. Lim Yang Bing in the Gang Pinggir at Santjoemeh.'"

"Piping hot," remarked Grenits, "poor Dalima's trial is scarcely over!"

"A Chinese wedding must be a curious affair," said van Rheijn. "You are going eh?"

"You may go if you like," returned van Nerekool, "I have not the slightest objection, if only you will allow me to stay at home. I could not, for the life of me, hold out my hand to that scoundrel Lim Ho, or offer him even the most formal congratulations."

"Come, come," said Grashuis. "There will no doubt be a great crowd, and it will be easy enough to get out of that part of the ceremony without being remarked at all; who is to notice it?"

"That's right!" laughed Grenits, "that's it '*des accommodements avec le ciel!*' But just let me see what this second document is about. Upon my word, Edward, you would have won your bet. The day after to-morrow, I have to surrender myself into the custody of the jailer to undergo my sentence of ten consecutive days of imprisonment."

For a few moments, a silence fell upon all present. They quite justified Grenits' conduct, and in fact applauded it as a generous outburst of manly indignation. But yet the fact of ten days' imprisonment threw a gloom over these young men, who were so full of vigour and life. The condemned man, however, was the first to regain his cheerfulness, "Well, my friends," cried he, "you will try and preserve me from feeling too lonely, I hope."

"That we will!" cried one, "I have a splendid novel by Ebers, called Serapis, it has only just come out, I will send it you."

"And I," exclaimed another, "I shall have my piano sent up to the jail, then you can strum away to your heart's content."

"And we will come and sit with you as often as we possibly can, you will not lack company."

"That's best of all!" cried Grenits gaily.

"I will bring my fiddle."

"Yes, and I my flute."

"Then," laughed Grenits, "we shall get the whole jail to execute a *sarabande de condamnés*."

"The sarabande is all very well," remarked van Beneden; "but I think we might do something better than that."

"Well, what is it?" asked all in chorus.

"You remember, do you not, that as we were seated together under the Wariengien tree on the green at Kaligaweh, I proposed making an experiment in opium smoking, in order to find out what its effect really is. Very well, on Sunday next, we might carry out that plan."

"Capital! a capital idea!"

"But," asked Grashuis, "who will provide the opium and the pipe?"

"Leave that to me," replied van Rheijn, "don't trouble about that, I shall get all we require."

"All right, gentlemen," said Grenits, "that's a bargain!"

As he spoke he shook hands with his friends, and the company broke up.

CHAPTER XXX.

BABOE DALIMA'S JOURNEY.

ALONG the rough mountain path which runs winding through the volcanic region of Soembrieng and Lindoro, baboe Dalima, a few days after her acquittal and release, was stepping along with her usual firm and springy tread. She was clad with the utmost simplicity in sarong and kabaja, but was as neat and tidy as in the days when she was Anna's favourite servant. On her shoulder, tied up in a shawl, she carried a bundle containing probably some articles of wearing apparel. We must notice also that she was not barefooted; but wore a pair of sandals to the use of which she seemed perfectly accustomed. It was evident, therefore, that the girl intended to take a long journey, while her outward appearance showed that she must already have got over a considerable amount of ground. How then did Dalima get to the spot where now we find her, at so great a distance from Kaligaweh, and what was the object of her journey?

Immediately after her release, she had made, as we saw in the last chapter, some anxious inquiries after nonna Anna. When she was told that her young mistress had gone to Karang Angjer and had then disappeared without leaving a trace, her simple brain had set to work; and there arose within her the determination to go and seek for Anna on her own account. She had but little comprehension of the social relations which exist between Europeans; but somehow her instinct told her that her beloved Nana must be in distress. She felt that the dear girl must be sorely in need of a companion, and so the faithful creature at once devoted herself to share the load of sorrow with her former mistress. But, Karang Anjer was a great way off—in her estimation the distance seemed infinite. Her friends in the dessa had told her that it lay somewhere yonder, not far from the great sea, and near to the territory of the Queen of the south, a mysterious being of whom the Javanese stand in the greatest awe.

But all that could not deter her. She made up her mind to summon up courage and to plod resolutely on, even though, as her friends again had informed her, the road might take her along seething solfataras, along burning mountains, along dizzying precipices and through lonely forests. She could travel only by day for fear of the wild beasts. Other fears she had none; for she knew that no man would wantonly molest her; and her outward appearance was not such as to suggest that she had anything to lose. And yet she did possess a treasure, which she had anxiously hoarded and had tied up in a handkerchief and now was carrying with her in the bundle which hung from her shoulder. When she lay in prison at Santjoemeh, nonna Anna had, from time to time, sent her small sums of money; van Beneden also and van Nerekool when they visited her to gather particulars for her defence, never failed to leave a few coins with the poor Javanese girl. All these presents she had thankfully accepted and most carefully saved up; for she always had an eye to the future. In this manner she had collected quite forty guilders, and this money, she had before starting, changed into twopenny and fivepenny pieces, knowing well that the sight of guilders or rixdollars might attract the attention of the evil-disposed, and might bring trouble upon her.

This money had, in fact, for some time been constantly present to her mind, and had been the cause of some hesitation before she finally could make up her mind to undertake her long journey. She had anxiously hoarded it to meet the expenses which she knew must soon come upon her. The money was dear to her, for she would not be a burden upon her poor mother, who, now that her father was a prisoner, had already trouble enough to feed her little brothers and sisters. This money she had clung to, for young as she was, she knew that a time of need would soon be at hand. But all these considerations vanished as she thought of her Nana—then she wavered no longer. Her own unhappy condition, indeed, gave her but little uneasiness. She knew how kind-hearted her country-women are, and she felt sure that in the hour of need, she would find some hospitable roof to shelter her; and that even the very poorest would reach her a helping hand, and would gladly share her modest ration of rice with a traveller in distress.

Once, at Kaligaweh, Dalima had received a visit from M'Bok Kărijăh, the loathsome confidante of Mrs. van Gulpendam. Perhaps it was at that lady's suggestion that the old hag went to see her. She had whispered to her something about a medicine made from the Clitoria Ternatea. At first poor Dalima had not understood what she meant and had opened her eyes wide with surprise—she knew nothing, of course, of the connection between the filthy old hag and the Resident's lady. But when the crone pretended to sympathise with her in her misfortune; and proceeded to speak out more plainly—then the girl's indignation and disgust knew no bounds, and she drove the old hag from her presence, threatening to rouse the entire dessa against her should she venture to show her face again. Her nature revolted at the foul crime which M'Bok dared to suggest, such practices she was quite content to leave to the more highly favoured daughters of civilisation.

Thus then had she started on her journey, and, with the little bundle which contained all her earthly possessions on her back, she had trudged over hill and dale; and after eight days of steady walking, she was beginning to draw near to her destination. Whenever, at nightfall, she reached some dessa she would at once seek out the native priest and tell him that she was travelling to Kar..ng Anjer in search for her father whom she hoped to find there.

Perceiving the plight she was in, the good man then used generally to direct her to some kind-hearted woman, who willingly took her in for the night, and not unfrequently refused to take the small coin she tendered in payment for her lodging. Sometimes even they would give her a couple of small parcels of boiled rice as provision on the road. But she was not always so fortunate. Sometimes it happened that she could not well make out the directions given to her, and thus night would come on before she could reach any inhabited spot. Then she used to beg for a resting-place on the bench of some guard-house, and her prayer was never refused. But, on one occasion, even this poor resource failed her. Her road that evening lay through a dense wood, the sun was about to set, and under the thick foliage it soon grew pitch dark. She could keep to the path only by looking upward and following the narrow strip of sky which showed through the tree-tops stretching along in the same direction as the rough road. The stars were twinkling brightly, and for some time she listened breathlessly hoping to hear some sound, such as the late crowing of a cock, or the measured strokes on the rice tomboks, which might lead her to some human dwelling. Then she hurried on again; but she did not come across even a detached guard-house. At length she was suddenly brought to a standstill by the shrill discordant "meoh! meoh!" of a peacock which, perched in the upper branches of a lofty tree, thus announced that the last glimmer of light was disappearing in the west. Dalima stopped in terror, for she well knew that the peacock is hardly ever heard in the woods unless a tiger is near. Soon, however, she recovered her presence of mind, and quickly glancing round, she plunged into the wood and began to climb into a tree which stood close by. She was not indeed very well fitted for such gymnastics; but carefully clambering up, she, with some trouble, managed to reach one of the lower branches. As soon as she got there she felt safe. A panther will rarely attack mankind, and the tiger, she knew, does not climb trees. So she tried to make herself as comfortable as she could on the branch which was, fortunately, quite thick enough to bear her weight, and grew out horizontally so as to form a kind of seat. But that night of nearly eleven hours seemed to her of interminable length. She did not dare to give way to sleep, fearing that she might lose her balance and fall to the ground, and the branch on which she tried to settle herself, and the trunk against which she leaned, were covered with a thick knotty bark, which pressed into her limbs and gave her great pain. Again and again she attempted to change her position, but the relief thus obtained was only temporary. Then she tried to assume the squatting attitude which is customary with the natives; but, in clambering up the tree, the sandals had dropped from her feet, and the rough bark, cutting into the soles of her feet, soon made that position unbearable. To these discomforts was added the plague of myriads of insects, such as ants, mosquitoes, sundry kinds of beetles and other pests, which settled upon her, and caused the most frightful itching, while her hands, which supported her, and with which she had to keep her balance, were not always free to brush the tormentors away.

She had also been obliged to drop her bundle, which contained her clothes, her money, in fact all she possessed; but she felt no anxiety on that account. No human being was present in that wood, and even if any one had been lurking about, he would hardly have been wandering in the dark just under the tree where she was seated. As for the animals which might be roving about, they would not disturb her little bundle. So the night crept slowly along, and it was with a deep sigh of relief that the poor girl at length welcomed the first faint streak of grey which began to tinge the eastern horizon. But she had much longer still to wait and endure the pain which every instant was getting more acute. For, during the night, she had heard very alarming sounds. The hoarse and terrible hoh! heoh! of the tiger had resounded more than once. There was no mistaking that well-known cry, and however painful her position might be, she could not yet venture to descend. Indeed the tiger is never more formidable than just at dawn of day—then he prowls about noiselessly like a huge cat seeking for his prey—then he hurries off to the nearest water hole to quench his burning thirst, and to lay in his provision of water for the day. In one word, she knew that the hour of early dawn is the most dangerous; and she felt that she must still have patience. On that branch she must remain perched until the sun was fairly above the horizon, and the daylight had penetrated the foliage, driving all evil beasts to their lairs.

Soon she found that she had done well to be patient, for once again the peacock gave forth his screeching meoh! meoh! thus hailing the dawn as he had the evening before greeted the last glow of the setting sun. Thus Dalima knew that the tiger was close by. So she kept her seat high up on her branch, shivering with cold in the keen morning air, while she watched the faint streak of light gradually expanding and deepening, and the stars fading away one by one. Gradually the rosy tint of morning began to spread to the zenith, driving back the damp shadows deeper and deeper into the wood. Oh! how slowly time seemed to go by! how lazily the sun seemed to rise! And no wonder; for the agony she was enduring was growing well-nigh intolerable. She twisted and stretched her cramped limbs as she anxiously peered all around. Under her feet all was as yet dusky and grey. She could only just descry her bundle lying under her on the grass, and her sandals at the foot of the tree; but overhead the light was already shining, and the choir of birds was beginning to carol forth its morning hymn of praise. But how slowly time crept on! She saw the sky assuming a deeper and ruddier hue, while the East was clad in glorious purple. The clouds, the trees, the leaves, the branches above were all bathed in gold, and presently the light broke through to the bottom of the wood.

Then the sun rose in his majesty and flooded everything in dazzling radiance. At length Dalima felt that she could safely leave her perch, and after giving another look round and observing the same precautions she used in clambering up, she began to descend. As soon as she reached the ground in safety, she stretched her numbed limbs, then she took up her bundle, in which she fortunately found a couple of parcels of rice. Swarms of ants were evidently anxious to share her breakfast with her; but these she soon got rid of. A little stream was murmuring close by, to this she hastened and bathed her face, her feet, and her arms in the cool refreshing water. Thus, having somewhat recovered from her painful night-watch, she sat down and enjoyed her rice, and a draught from the clear brook. Then with fresh courage and renewed strength, she continued her journey.

The whole of that day she plodded along patiently until she came to a guard-house, where she heard the joyful news that the next dessa she would come to was Karang Anjer.

"How far is it from here?" she asked.

The man looked puzzled; for your Javanese is not much of a hand at judging distances. However, after a few moments' reflection, he told her that she would have to pass about fifty telegraph poles.

Next day, with fresh courage she resumed her journey, and, after a good half-hour's walking, she reached the dessa.

She lost no time in inquiring for the house of Mrs. Steenvlak and, having found it, she sent in her name to the njonja, adding that she was the baboe of nonna Anna. During her stay with the Steenvlaks, Anna had often, very often, spoken about her faithful servant, and always in terms of the greatest kindness and affection, so that Dalima found the most cordial reception. But, as regards the main object of her long journey, the poor baboe could get no information whatever. Prayers and entreaties were alike in vain. To all her questions she could obtain no other answer than, "I do not know."

"But, njonjaa, Nana has been staying with you here," cried the poor girl.

"Yes, Dalima, that is so."

"But where is she now, njaa?"

"She has gone away."

"Yes, njaa; but where is she?"

"That I cannot tell you."

The faithful young girl twisted and turned her questions in every conceivable way—most plaintively she lengthened out her "njonjaaa"—but she could get no answer.

Did Mrs. Steenvlak really not know what had become of Anna? That was hardly probable. Might she perhaps have some suspicion that Dalima had been sent on her errand by van Nerekool? That was precisely what the lady did think probable. She knew that the girl was well aware of the affection which existed between her mistress and the young lawyer, and, moreover, Dalima had, in the course of conversation quite innocently remarked, that Charles van Nerekool had visited her in the prison at Santjoemeh, and that she had received money from him. Mrs. Steenvlak was very far indeed from harbouring any sinister suspicions against Dalima; she saw perfectly well that love for her mistress was the only motive that had brought her all that distance. But yet, she could not help thinking that this devotion to Anna was mingled with some feeling of gratitude for the European gentleman who had showed himself so kind to Dalima in her distress. And again, might not the girl honestly imagine that in bringing the lovers together she was promoting the happiness of both? These considerations made Mrs. Steenvlak very guarded in her replies.

"Njonjaa," began Dalima again, "do tell me where I may find my Nana."

"I have told you already, and I tell you again, that I know nothing about it," was the lady's answer.

"But, njaa, tell me, do you know where she has gone to?" cried Dalima, wringing her hands.

"No, I tell you—how should I, baboe?"

"But you know at least in which direction she went?" asked the girl, still sticking to her point.

"Of course," replied Mrs. Steenvlak, "I know that."

"Oh, then, tell me," cried the sobbing girl, with a ray ot hope in her swollen eyes.

"I may not, I cannot tell you, baboe."

"But why not, njaa?"

"Because, before Anna left me she made me promise her—"

"What, njaa?"

"That I would let no one know—no one, do you understand me, Dalima?"

"That does not apply to me, you may trust me, njaa."

"No, no," replied Mrs. Steenvlak, "I will trust no one—Anna was particularly anxious that I should not speak."

"But, perhaps she is in need of my help, njaa. Where can she be? She is not fit to take care of herself, she is not accustomed to it. Do tell me," sobbed the poor girl again, "I must find my Nana."

"No," said Mrs. Steenvlak firmly, "a promise once made must not be broken, you know that as well as I do, Dalima."

For all her firmness, the kind-hearted lady was deeply moved by the devotion of the poor creature, who had already gone through so much suffering in her little life, that it was a wonder her temper had not been soured altogether by misfortune. She was half sorry that she had given her word to Anna; but yet, until she was authorised to do so, she did not feel justified in breaking silence.

"The best advice I can give you," she said at length, as she looked with much compassion at the girl who sat sobbing at her feet, "is to return at once to Santjoemeh, or better still to Kaligaweh. Can I do anything for you to help you on your journey back?"

Baboe Dalima sadly shook her head.

"Come, come, you will want some money on the road, eh?" and opening her purse she took out four rix-dollars and put them into the girl's hand.

Without uttering a word, Dalima accepted the gift, and carefully tied up the money in her handkerchief. Then she rose, respectfully kissed Mrs. Steenvlak's hand, and disappeared.

As soon as she got outside, she muttered, "That gives me so many more days to look for Nana."

Dalima's wants were but few. A couple of pence for her lodging, some twenty, or five and twenty cents for her food—that was all she required. Instead of leaving Karang Anjer, she continued to wander about the neighbourhood. She questioned, she inquired, she managed to penetrate everywhere. She could do what van Nerekool, as a European, and in his position as judge, was not able to do. She would, for instance, sit down at every small fruit and coffee stall she found on her way. At one place she would sit down and eat some rice, flavoured with red pepper; at another place again she would purchase some rasped cocoa-nut sweetened with the syrup of goela-areng; at another little stall again she would sip a cup of coffee or eat a bunch of ramboetans. These delicacies she could purchase for a very few cents, sometimes they cost her nothing at all; for the woman who kept the stall would look strangely at her, and when she produced her money would quietly put it back, and say: "Never mind, keep that for your baby, and take another cup of coffee, you are welcome to it."

But Dalima did not sit down at these stalls to enjoy herself—she did so because it gave her an opportunity of asking questions and making inquiries. But, alas, all her perseverance and all her endeavours were, for a considerable time, fruitless. During the first few days of her wandering, she learned absolutely nothing. She was beginning to despair, and to give up all hope of success. She was, however, soon to have her reward; for on a certain day, as she was slowly walking through the dessa Prembanan, which is situated about three miles to the southwest of Karang Anjer, she obtained some information which seemed to point in the right direction.

A woman told her that, on a certain day, about two months ago, one of the poles of a light litter suddenly snapped, and a fresh pole had to be procured. The bearers put down the litter and, as a bamboo of sufficient length and strength was not very easily found, some considerable delay ensued. During this time of waiting, a nonna had stepped out of the litter, and had taken a seat at the stall, and called for a cup of coffee.

"A nonna, you say?" cried Dalima breathless with excitement: "are you sure of that?"

"Oh, yes, quite sure," replied the woman. "She was dressed exactly like all Javanese girls, in a very simple sarong and a plain cotton kabaja, and she had sandals on her feet. But those feet had evidently been but little exposed to the sun, they were very small, very white, and not at all flattened out as our feet are. I fancy that not even the princesses at Sălă have fairer and tinier feet; but for that matter she might perhaps have been a princess."

"Why do you think so?" asked Dalima.

"Well, she spoke Javanese; but entirely with the ă sound so that I had some difficulty in catching what she said."

"You spoke to her then, ma?"

"Yes, I did," replied the stall-keeper, "she spoke with something of your accent."

"But what did she say to you, ma?"

"She first asked for coffee and then for ramboetans."

"Did she say anything more?—do try and remember."

"Oh, yes; she further asked me how far it is from here to the dessa Sikaja, and I told her that it is about two miles off."

"Anything else?" cried Dalima impatiently.

"Then she asked how far Sikaja is from the dessa Pringtoetoel; but I could not tell her that, as I know nothing of the country beyond our own district."

"Did you hear her say anything more, ma?"

"No."

"But ma, did you see her face?"

"Certainly I did," replied the woman, "why not?'

"And?" asked Dalima, anxiously.

"Her features were those of a white woman, though rather dark. Her face and hands, however, did not correspond in colour with her feet. In fact I suspected at the time that she had stained them. But perhaps the nonna had been running about a good deal in the sun."

"And her hair, ma?" asked Dalima.

"It was tied up in a knot."

"What colour was it, ma?"

"It was as black as yours; but much softer, it looked like silk and was wavy. Oh, yes! now I feel sure she was a nonna."

"Yes," thought Dalima, "it is she;" and then she continued aloud:

"She asked you no other question, ma?"

"No, nothing else," replied the stall-keeper.

Dalima did not stay long—a quarter of an hour later she was on her way to Sikaja. How she sped there, we shall see later on. The day after, she reappeared in Karang Anjer; but it was only to fetch the bundle she had left behind her. Then she disappeared, and no one saw or heard anything more of her.

Mrs. Steenvlak sent a couple of oppassers to inquire what had become of her; but they returned saying that the girl had gone away, no one could tell whither.

"She must have gone back to Santjoemeh," thought Mrs. Steenvlak. "Was I right after all in keeping my word to Anna? Time will show. Anna did seem greatly attached to her baboe; and no doubt, in her present lonely state, the girl would be a pleasant and useful companion."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE PRISON AT SANTJOEMEH—THE OPIUM-TRADE AT ATJEH.

IT was a glorious afternoon in August and the green at Santjoemeh presented a pleasant and most animated appearance. The military band was performing a selection of music and numbers of carriages were slowly moving about among a crowd of pedestrians. The fine turf which, during the west monsoon, gives the square so fresh and pleasant an aspect, was now completely dried up and burnt to a uniform dark brown tint, while here and there the soil, which mostly consists of red clay, was gaping open in wide fissures under the scorching influence of the tropical sun.

But at that hour in the afternoon, the sun had already run a considerable portion of his daily course, and was casting his slanting rays through the tops of the tall kanarie trees which, with their dark and glossy foliage, enclose the green as in a frame of verdure. The north-easterly monsoon was blowing freshly along the coasts of Java; it was rustling in the leaves, in the branches, and even far inland it was making its cooling influence felt, pleasantly tempering the heat of the day.

The whole of Santjoemeh was astir. Europeans, natives, Chinamen and Arabs were walking about in motley groups. Every one seemed bent upon enjoying the music and upon breathing his share of the deliciously cool evening air.

The Resident van Gulpendam and his wife, as charming as ever, had driven up the green in a handsome landau drawn by a pair of splendid horses. They were very busy exchanging greetings and nods on all sides; and distributing their most affable smiles among their friends and acquaintances. Officials of all kinds and of all grades were there and the leading men of commerce; all these, accompanied by their wives and daughters, sauntered about laughing, talking, or enjoying the music.

We just now said all Santjoemeh was astir. But yet anyone who was well acquainted with the European world at Santjoemeh—and really it was not very difficult in that small inland town to become tolerably well known to everyone of any social importance—could not help noticing that one small group was wanting; a group which, by reason of its youth, its wit and gaiety, always was wont to impart a certain flavour of mirth to all these gatherings; a group which used to attract the brightest eyes and win the most beaming smiles—this little group was, on the present occasion, conspicuous by its absence.

"What can have become of Edward van Rheijn?"

"Where is Leendert Grashuis?"

"Where can August van Beneden have got to?"

Such were the inquiries which might be heard on every side.

"Yes, and Grenits, where is he? What has become of our merry Theodoor?"

"Theodoor? Why, don't you know—he is in the lock-up?"

"Oh, yes, of course, I had quite forgotten; he is in for ten days, eh?"

"Ah! well then, you hardly need ask where the others are to be found."

"They are keeping him company you may be sure—*cela va sans dire.*"

"They are faithful friends these four."

"Faithful, you call them? I tell you their devotion to each other is positively edifying. They are simply inseparable."

"Hallo!" cried another, "there goes Mokesuep!"

"I say, just look; now he is making his bow to the Resident. What a magnificent sweep—his hat almost touches the ground!"

"And what a charming smile the fair Laurentia is giving him."

"I should rather think so. In that late business of Lim Ho—"

"Come, I say! no scandal if you please!"

"Scandal you call it; why, all Santjoemeh is talking about it!"

"Mokesuep," cried another, "won't go and pay Grenits a visit, I bet!"

"He had better not show his nose there; he would find himself in queer street, I fancy!"

"Yes, that he would; and no more than he deserves—the scoundrel!"

"Look at him now, shaking hands with the Assistant Resident."

"He is only a new chum—as soon as he has got to know the fellow—"

"Why, then he will do just exactly as the Resident does; he will follow his lead, you will see."

"Well, well," remarked another, "such fellows have their value."

"Come gentlemen, do keep quiet; let us listen; they are just striking up *Le lever du soleil*."

"The *lever* of what did you say? That's a good joke—the sun is just setting."

"Do be quiet, I want to hear the music."

It was the last piece on the programme, and at the moment when a brilliant fugue seemed to celebrate the rising of the orb of day—the actual sun was disappearing behind the hills to the west of Santjoemeh.

"Just twelve hours out!" cried one, "either the sun or the bandmaster must have been having a drop too much!"

A very few minutes afterwards the green was deserted.

However, the frequenters of the Sunday afternoon concert, had been quite right in their surmise. Van Nerekool, van Beneden and van Rheijn—the three "vans," as the wits of Santjoemeh loved to call them, had indeed gone to the prison to pass the afternoon and evening, with their friend Grenits. He, poor fellow, had been condemned to ten days' imprisonment, and he had already been in durance vile for some time.

As soon as they had had their bath after the usual siesta, they had started for the prison, and at that hour the sun was still high and the streets were almost deserted. They were true friends and they cheerfully gave up these hours of amusement, which were indeed the most pleasant of the whole week, to the poor prisoner. It was a sacrifice, however, which brought its own reward.

The apartment in which the young men were on that afternoon assembled, did not by any means wear a dismal appearance, it suggested anything rather than a prison cell. The room was of moderate size and perfectly square. On either side of the door two large windows admitted light and air, and these could be closed by means of venetian blinds. The door gave access to a tolerably wide verandah, the architraves of which rested on pillars in the Doric style; and this gallery was common to four other similar apartments which served the same purpose as that for which Grenits was immured—namely to deprive their occupants, for the time being, of liberty.

That verandah looked out upon a small but cheerful looking quadrangle, very tastefully laid out in grass plots and planted with flowering shrubs all covered with gay and many-coloured blossoms.

The little square was enclosed by the buildings which formed the jail, one of its sides being occupied by the governor's house, a building which had a double row of pillars and whose spacious front-gallery was enlivened by a splendid collection of roses of all kinds, amongst which the thick double Persian rose, the fair *Devoniensis*, the *Souvenir de la Malmaison* and the fragrant tea-rose were conspicuous.

The room occupied by Grenits was very prettily furnished. It had a good table, a very comfortable seat something like a garden seat, and half-a-dozen chairs; all these of the best native workmanship. The walls were hung with four or five fairly good pictures, and a handsome lamp was suspended from the ceiling. The floor was almost entirely covered with tiles and these again were hidden by matting of the finest texture. But the most elegant piece of furniture the room contained was undoubtedly the piano which van Beneden had sent to the prison for his friend's amusement. The bedroom, no less tastefully furnished than the apartment we have attempted to describe, was immediately adjacent to the sitting-room—so that Grenits had not much reason to complain, and his captivity was not very irksome. Said Grashuis, as he entered and looked around:

"Why, old fellow! this looks really very comfortable. This is the first time I have ever been inside a prison, and I had no idea the Government took such good care of the criminals it has to keep under lock and key."

"That's all you know about it!" laughed van Rheijn, "you ought to go and inspect the other side."

"Where? on that side?" asked Grashuis as he pointed to the governor's house.

"No, no," said van Beneden, "yonder in that wing, that is where you ought to go and have a look. That would make you sing a different tune."

"Shall we go?" cried Leendert as he rose from his seat.

"Thank you, much obliged—the smell would soon drive you away. The poor native prisoners lie there huddled together in a space miserably too small for them. The only furniture you would see there is a wretched bench or two, which in filthiness so closely rivals the floor, that the original colour of both has long since disappeared. At nightfall some further ornaments are introduced in the shape of sundry representatives of the tub family—and these utensils presently contribute their fragrance to the already pestilent atmosphere. The prisoners have but a very scanty allowance of air and light, admitted through two small heavily barred openings. The walls are supposed to be white-washed; but are smeared all over with blotches of blood, produced by mosquitoes and other still fouler insects crushed against them by the human finger, and are covered with sirih-spittle and other nameless abominations. All things considered, I believe you will give me credit for acting the part of a friend in strongly dissuading you from paying a visit to that horrid den."

"Yes, August is quite right," remarked Grenits. "I ventured to go and have a look at the place yesterday, and I have not yet got over my feelings of disgust. But come, let us change the subject. Edward, your boy has just now brought me a parcel."

"Yes, I sent him with it, where is it?"

"It is there, just over there on the piano."

"My friend," said van Rheijn as he deliberately opened the parcel, "here you have a brand-new bedoedan. You see the bowl is perfectly pure and the stem has never been used. And here is a small quantity of the very best tjandoe—prime quality as Grenits might say."

"Oh yes," said Beneden—"that is, I suppose, for our experiment, is it not? How much opium have you there?"

"This little box contains about twenty-five matas."

"How much may that be?"

"Let me see! That comes to about one centigramme."

"But is that enough?" asked Grashuis.

"Enough? Yes, Leendert, too much!" replied van Rheijn.

"Yet van Micclucho Macclay, in his well-known experiment consumed one hundred and seven grains."

"Well, if you reckon it up as I have done, you will find that a hundred and seven grains come to only eighteen matas and a fraction."

"Very good, in that case we might begin at once."

"Now please don't be in such a hurry," put in van Rheijn.

"Why should we put it off?" asked Grashuis. "We have now a few quiet hours before us, such an opportunity may not recur."

"But, I take it," objected van Nerekool, "our object is not merely to observe the sensations which opium smoking produces."

"Methinks," interrupted Grashuis, "that there has never been a question of anything else."

"That may be so," replied van Nerekool; "but yet I fancy we must all have some further object in view. Speaking for myself, I should be very sorry indeed to have anything to do with an experiment, whereby—well, how shall I best express myself?—whereby merely the animal side of the question is to be considered."

"Yes, and so should I," cried van Beneden.

"And so say I," added van Rheijn.

"Yet," remarked Grenits, "even from that low point of view the problem would be worth studying. Don't you remember what we saw in the den at Kaligaweh?"

"Bah! bah!" cried all in disgust.

"Come, no more of that," said van Nerekool very seriously. "If your experiment is to reproduce any scenes like those—then I will take no part in it."

"That is exactly my opinion," said van Rheijn, "and I am anxious therefore to give to our investigation a totally different aspect, and to conduct it on strictly scientific principles."

"Very well," observed Grashuis; "but who is to conduct this scientific investigation—to do that we need a man of science."

"Yes," said van Beneden, "we are no doubt most competent representatives of the judicial, the civil, the mathematical and the commercial branches of the community; but we do not represent the faculty."

"Just so," replied van Rheijn; "but I have made provision for that?"

"In what way?"

"I have invited Murowski to join us."

"What? Murowski the Pole?" cried one.

"Murowski the snake-charmer?" said another.

"Murowski the butterfly hunter?" cried a third.

"Yes, gentlemen, Murowski, our learned medical officer. But, if you please, a little more respect for that high-priest of science. Do not, pray, forget that he is the most celebrated entomologist India has ever possessed and that is, I think, saying a good deal in these days when every little German prince gives his paltry decorations and family orders for any complete—or incomplete—collection of insects, or for a bowl of disgusting reptiles tortured to death in arrack. And, further, please not to forget that he is a most earnest observer of all scientific phenomena, a man whose very name will impress upon our *séance* that stamp of learning which it will need if it is to go forth to the world of science as a noteworthy experiment. Our Pole was in ecstasies when he heard of our experiment, and when I asked him to undertake the management of it, he promised to bring his thermometers, his stethoscopes—You will see what a dose of learning he will give us!"

"That's all very fine;" said Grenits, "but meanwhile he has not turned up."

"Perhaps," suggested van Beneden, "he is hunting butterflies."

"Excuse me," replied van Rheijn, "in addition to his other merits, the man is also a great lover of music. Nothing in the world would induce him to miss the afternoon concert on the green, moreover he is deeply smitten with Miss Agatha van Bemmelen, and she, no doubt, is there in the family coach."

"Oh, ho!" said Grenits, "that is a pretty little butterfly, she has money too."

"Oh, yes, your Poles are no fools."

"But how long will he be?"

"He has promised me," replied van Rheijn, "to join us as soon as the music is over; and he is the man to keep to his word."

"Meanwhile we might get up a little music on our own account," suggested van Beneden.

"You see," said Grenits pointing to the piano, "Charles is at his post already."

Van Nerekool, who had taken but little part in the conversation, had, in fact, risen and gone to the piano. At first, in an absent kind of way, he struck a few chords; but presently, under the influence of thoughts which always reverted to Anna, he had struck up *L'absence* of Tal. The room soon was filled with melancholy strains and sentimental trills.

"No, no!" cried van Rheijn, "let us have no music, you see what effect it has. Just look at him sitting there, why there are tears in his eyes! A most pernicious thing, believe me, in this climate and in this horrid dungeon."

The last chord had died away and still van Nerekool remained moodily seated at the instrument, his head bent forward and his hands resting heavily on the keys.

"I say, Charles!" cried Edward, "no more music now. Come and sit here by me, and, while we are waiting for Murowski, I have a letter to read to you which I have just now received from Verstork."

"From William!" exclaimed van Nerekool; and, rousing himself at the name of his friend, he took the seat van Rheijn indicated to him.

"It is strange," he continued, "I have had no answer to my letter."

"No more have I," said van Beneden.

"Nor I!" cried Grenits.

"I don't much wonder at that," replied van Rheijn, "he is much too busy yonder at Kotta Radja. You may fancy how much he has to do, as he is the only civilian in that military world."

"Yes," said Grashuis, "a military world which has become a very small one now that our centralising system has come into operation."

"A system, Leendert, which might more properly be styled a system of isolation," said Grenits; "it won't be very long before our grand army will be sitting there like Robinson Crusoe on his desert island without any other means of communication with the surrounding inhabitants than that of bullets."

"Come, come, Theodoor," interrupted one, "no politics."

"Especially, I suppose, no Atjeh politics," laughed Grenits. "Oh aye, I know all about that, we Dutchmen dread that subject as a cat dreads water; but, my friends, remember that for all that, it is a question which involves the most vital interests of our country and its colonies."

"Now that'll do, that'll do!" they cried.

"All right, my friends," said Grenits with a laugh, "I must not, of course, inflict upon my kind friends who deign to come and while away the time of a poor captive, a subject of conversation which is distasteful to them. But, yet, I cannot make out what in the world William can have to control at Kotta Radja. The native population which has, nominally, remained faithful to us and shows its good faith by treacherously attacking our soldiers—"

"Now there you go again—do shut up!"

"Well, but;" persisted Grenits, "this is no politics, I do not suppose he has to look after the mess of the soldiers and marines!"

"Bah!" cried van Rheijn somewhat contemptuously, "what does a merchant know about such things? It is very much as if I should give a dissertation on the state of trade in madapollams."

"You are right, quite right," laughed Grenits, "I confess myself wrong. Let the cobbler stick to his last. But now for William; what does he write about?"

"Here is his letter," said van Rheijn; "but I ought first to tell you that I sent him a short account of the changes which have taken place in his district of Banjoe Pahit since he left it. I told him what lamentable influence the too compliant temper of his successor has had upon the condition of the population. To this letter of mine I have his reply, and I need hardly tell you that his views on that subject are not *couleur de rose.* But you had better hear what he says:

"'All you have told me, dear Edward, about the state of affairs at Banjoe Pahit has made me very sad. Agriculture neglected, breach of contract a daily occurrence, and the fatal passion for opium increasing day by day! Alas, alas! can all this be justly put to the account of my successor? Should you not rather cast the blame upon me? Such terrible changes surely never take place suddenly. No, no, if indeed matters have changed for the worse as rapidly as you say, then I fear there must have been some antecedent cause for this wretched state of decay. I will tell you frankly, my friend, that my conscience bitterly upbraids me. It tells me that I have not always done that which it was my bounden duty to do; and that I have not set my face against the abuse of opium as sternly and as rigidly as I should have done. It is true, of course, that the opium den was established at Kaligaweh before I came to the place; and, so far, my conscience is clear. But the evil had not then assumed the proportions which makes it such a terrible curse at present. At that time there were still a great number of inhabitants who never touched opium. I might then, had I only been firm enough, have insisted upon the fact, that the opium den ought not to be maintained there—that, in fact, it had no reason to exist, inasmuch as it did not, at that time, provide for any local need. I did so, it is true; but weak and timid as I was, I did so in a half-hearted way. I did not forcibly enough insist upon the terrible fact that this same opium den was a most insidious means of seduction; and that, in the end, it must inevitably bring the poor people to ruin and misery.

"'That is where I feel I am to blame. I may, perhaps, in self justification, try to persuade myself that, as a civil servant, I was bound to do all I could to augment the national income, that, by not opposing with all my might the use of opium, I was helping, as far as I could, to redress the balance of our national expenditure; that, even had I tried to check the havoc wrought by this baleful drug, I could have expected no assistance from my superior officer van Gulpendam, nor yet have hoped for any support from the authorities at home; that, on the contrary, they would between them have crushed me like a bit of glass had I dared so much as to lift up my little finger against this infamous stop-gap of our national finances. I have tried to persuade myself that any such action on my part must have plunged my relations, who for the present and, as far as I can see, for the future, are entirely dependent upon me, into the direst proverty—

"'But, my dear Edward, all this sophistry profits me nothing; my conscience refuses to be lulled by any such specious arguments. For conscience is inexorable, and it loudly cries out that I have failed to do my duty as public servant in not vigorously standing up for the poor natives to whose protection I was pledged. Alas! the past cannot be recalled!

"'If it were lawful, under any circumstances whatever, to rejoice over the death of any fellow creature, I think I might rejoice over the death of Singomengolo—that detestable bandoelan who has caused so much trouble and misery. But, why do I talk of exulting over his death? Some equally worthless fellow will no doubt be found to take his place and to undertake the dirty work of an opium spy. The farmers are wealthy enough to create, so to speak, such creatures every where, and the Government! why—the Government—yes, it will, with a smile, pocket the foully earned money amidst the applause of the Dutch nation.'"

"I say!" exclaimed Grenits, sarcastically, "don't you think it is about time to cry 'Shut up?'"

But van Rheijn went on quietly reading, not heeding the interruption:

"'I was just now blaming myself for not having carried out my duty more strictly. I hardly need tell you that I have made a solemn vow to act very differently in the future, and that I have determined henceforth to protect, to the utmost of my powers, the natives against the horrors of opium. But, that is more easily said than done. For, whom can I protect out here in Atjeh? The native population? Good Lord! all I see about me in this place resembles anything in the world rather than a native population. There is no such thing. Just let me tell you what is going on here. General van Swieten landed in 1873, and from that moment the natives have retired as our troops have advanced. When he returned to Europe we were holding a piece of ground which was completely deserted by the natives, and on which not a single Javanese was ever seen. I ought to except the narrow strip of land between the river Atjeh and the sea, the so-called dominion of Marassa, which, at most, supported no more than two thousand souls, and these, let me tell you, were by no means addicted to opium. Later on, when Colonel Pel took the command, things did not improve, on the contrary, the state of affairs grew gradually worse and worse. The natives were more determined than ever in their resistance to the hated invaders; and though that officer did try to introduce something like order into that most puzzling place Kotta Radja, which was entrusted to his care, and it must be said, did so with conspicuous success, yet daily his position became, if possible, one of greater isolation. Very soon no other communication with the surrounding natives became possible than by means of arms; and when they did meet it was not for the purpose of amicable conferences, but only to do one another as much injury as possible. You know all about this, for history must have told it you. The very first thing, indeed, which arises and flourishes under the folds of our Dutch ensign is not a house of prayer or a school, but an opium den. That is the first token of civilisation and the first blessing our rule brings with it. Among these conquered races there was not, as yet, a single man who would smoke the stuff; but yet an opium farmer had to be found. And why? Look you, Edward, when I put that question seriously to myself, then I can find no other answer than this one, namely: that it was necessary to make the Dutch people believe that the time of public expenditure on Atjeh had passed, and that now the place was beginning to pay. You may remember what a shout of joy was uttered by the daily press in Holland when, in the year 1875, the news arrived that the retail sale of opium in Atjeh was producing a yearly sum of 190,000 guilders, that is 16,000 guilders a month. A few, those who were capable of reflection, shook their heads doubtfully; but not even they were able to estimate the extent of the evil which this apparent gain would inevitably entail.

"'It is, however, as clear as day, that no farmer could have been found to bid for the monopoly if the opium had been sold only to the few Marassans who remained faithful to us. Even granting that every single man of them smoked opium—and that was very far from being true, for the lower classes in this place are not nearly so much addicted to the habit as they are in Java; but even granting that—the entire number of smokers could not have exceeded three hundred. How could sixteen thousand guilders a month have been made out of these?—Why, it was clearly impossible, not even if every man smoked opium, drank opium and ate opium. You must consider that the farmer has to pay for the raw material with which the Government supplies him, that he has to pay all current expenses, that he has to make a living for himself, and that he must, moreover, make some profit. Thus I confidently state that, in order to be able to give sixteen thousand guilders for his privilege, he must retail opium for at least three times that amount. But who then are the consumers? Who are the people that bring this so-called profit to our national chest?

"'I will tell you, Edward, who they are:

"'In the first place, all the native soldiers quartered here In consequence of the state of war and of the wretched arrangements in camp and bivouac, it is utterly impossible to keep any control over these men, and thus there is no question of repressive—still less of preventive—measures. The agents of the opium farmer prowl about among the encampments and bivouacs and most generously deign to accept, in payment of the poison they supply, the pay and, when that is gone, even the very clothing of the soldiers.

"'Now, my friend, I ask you, do you begin to see why, during the Atjeh war, we suffered such terrible losses through sickness, and why our losses still remain so great? Now do you begin to see why all our hospitals are overcrowded? Do you now see what has demoralised our entire Indian force to such an extent, that, if we should have to face a serious rebellion or have to resist an attack on our colonies from any Western power—we can expect very little, or indeed nothing at all, from it? Then just reckon up what every soldier costs by the time he is equipped and drilled and fit to send out to join his regiment in the field. Just calculate what expense the country is put to for keeping all these men in hospital, and then you will be able to judge of the wretched shortsightedness of a policy which has created so fictitious a source of gain.

"'I have mentioned, in the first place, the native soldiers as principal consumers of the poison; but the Chinese coolies and workmen also, whom the Government has to hire at an immense cost, from Penang, from Malacca, from Singapore, from Tandjong Pinang, and even from China itself, to occupy the country which the Atjehers have deserted, furnish another considerable contingent to the opium smokers, and consequently to the floating population of the hospitals and to the fixed population of the grave-yards. Who shall dare to compute with anything approaching to accuracy, the sums of money which are thus squandered merely to fill up the gaps which the abuse of opium is perpetually making among this working population?

"'And, in the third place, the opium farmer finds his customers among the servants of the numerous officers, civil servants, and contractors; and, though this class of smokers do not entail any loss in the shape of money, inasmuch as the State has not to replace them; yet it must not be forgotten that as a direct consequence of the demoralisation of this class of men, there is at present at Kotta Radja, and more especially at Oleh-leh, a degree of insecurity of life and property, of which in Java you can form not the slightest conception.

"'With regard to the moral condition of Oleh-leh, the harbour of Kotta Radja, it is simply indescribable! The things which daily are taking place in the opium dens within and around that spot where the poison can legally be purchased, simply baffle description.

"'We saw some horrid sights at Kaligaweh, did we not? Well, my friend, what happens here exceeds everything that the most depraved imagination can possibly conjure up.

"'The practices are, in one word, abominable.

"'But, you may say perhaps, that if the poison were not to be obtained in a lawful way, men would procure it by illegal means. I say no! most emphatically I say no! Not a single ship can approach the North-West part of Sumatra's coast without being thoroughly searched. Very little trouble and care would be amply sufficient to prevent even as much as a single taël of opium to find its way into that part of Atjeh which is in our occupation. It would be the simplest thing in the world to prevent the import of the poison altogether.

"'But no, that is not the object. The object of the Government, on the contrary, is to stimulate the opium trade as much as possible, and if ever the now rebellious population is brought under our yoke, the trade will flourish more vigorously than ever. The Dutch nation must be made to believe that Atjeh really produces a revenue, though, from even a financial point of view, this bogus revenue must result in the direst loss.

"'In order to attain that object we have stuck at nothing—we have poisoned and demoralized the civil and military branches of the State—and have degraded men to the level of the beast. And all this merely for the prospect of the rich harvest which the opium trade will yield to the national exchequer as soon as we shall have forced Atjeh to share the blessings of our rule.

"'Under these circumstances, you can readily see that it is difficult—that it is in fact impossible—for me to do what I feel it is my duty to do. That duty is incompatible with the position of a Government official.'"

CHAPTER XXXII

A SCIENTIFIC OPIUM DEN

THE reader was here interrupted by a loud voice crying out in the verandah:

"*Donnerwetter!* what has become of Mr. Grenits?"

"That's our Pole," said van Rheijn, folding up the letter he was reading and replacing it in his pocket. "There is nothing specially interesting in the end of William's letter, and I do not think it advisable to allow a private communication of this kind to spread beyond our own little circle."

The door opened and Dr. Murowski entered. Having shaken hands with the prisoner and greeted the other gentlemen, he said in a queer lingo of his own, made up of Dutch, German, and Polish, but which we will not attempt to reproduce:

"Rather behind time, I fear, gentlemen, rather behind time, but *donnerwetter*—!"

"Come, come, doctor," said van Beneden with a laugh, "no strong language if you please. I daresay you fell in with Miss van Bemmelen on the green."

The doctor reddened up to the very roots of his hair, as he replied in some confusion:

"Well, yes, I did meet her—"

"In that case, my dear fellow," continued van Beneden, "you need not trouble yourself to make any apology at all, where there is a lady in the case—"

"Stuff and nonsense!" broke in Murowski, "I wasn't in her company for five minutes!"

"If that be the case, doctor," said van Rheijn, "we must ask you why you have kept us so long. You knew we were all here waiting for you."

"Oh, never mind," put in Grashuis with a smile, "don't press him too hard—our learned friend has probably been hunting some other pretty little butterfly!"

"Yes, I can see him," continued van Beneden, "net in hand, running after some splendid Sphynx."

"Indeed," growled Murowski, "you seem to have a pretty lively imagination. Sphynx indeed! A funny kind of Sphynx has been after me!"

Van Rheijn laughed aloud. "Now, come," said he, "illustrious countryman of Sobieski, of Poniatowski, and so many other worthies in ski, let us have your news—for news you evidently have to tell us. Let us have it. But, mind you, whatever excuse you may have to make—it will have to be a good one."

"As I was strolling about the green enjoying the music," began the doctor, "my chief called me aside and said he wanted to see me at his quarters as soon as ever the concert was over."

"Well, what of that?" cried the friends.

"A request of this kind," rejoined the Pole, "is, as you know, gentlemen, tantamount to a positive order."

"Yes, yes," cried van Rheijn, full of curiosity, "we grant you that; but what important communication had he to make to you?"

"No doubt some case of pneumato—" began van Beneden. But Murowski did not give him time to complete his sentence.

"He simply wanted to tell me that I am to be transferred to another station."

'You are going to leave us?" exclaimed the friends in a breath.

"Yes, gentlemen, so it seems—you see I have been a very long time settled in this place," grumbled Murowski, "it must be quite five months and a half."

"Well, and where are they going to send you to?"

"To Gombong, it appears."

"They might very easily have packed you off to a worse place," said van Rheijn, "to Singkelen, for instance, or to Atjeh."

"Oh, I have no doubt you are quite right there," sighed Murowski, "but where on earth is Gombong? You must excuse my ignorance, gentlemen," continued he, with a smile, "the study of Indian geography is, I fear, somewhat neglected in Poland."

"Gombong," exclaimed van Rheijn, "is in Bagelen."

"Indeed," replied the Pole, "I am much obliged to you for the information; but where may Bagelen be?"

"Bagelen," said the embryo-controller, with a certain sense of superiority, pointing in the required direction, "Bagelen is only just over there."

"Not over the sea then?" cried Murowski, evidently much relieved.

"No, no, my dear fellow, not a bit of it; a carriage will take you there very comfortably. But, why don't you ask van Nerekool, he has but just returned from the very place. He knows all about it. Why! he lost his heart there!"

"Lost his heart? At Gombong?" asked Murowski, looking from one to the other with a puzzled air.

"Not exactly at Gombong; but at all events very close by, at Karang Anjer. Do you know Miss van Gulpendam?"

"Pretty Miss van Gulpendam! Of course I do," exclaimed the doctor.

"Very well then, Miss van Gulpendam has gone to Karang Anjer, and she has taken our friend's heart along with her."

"That's smart," replied the Pole, quite mistaking the meaning of the word he employed.

"Oh, you think so?" asked Grashuis, drily.

This conversation, as may well be supposed, was highly distasteful to van Nerekool. He hastened to put an end to it by saying:

"Gentlemen, I vote we begin to think of our experiment."

"Ah, you are right," exclaimed the doctor, our *experientia* by all means; *experientia optima rerum magistra* you know. By-the-bye, did you receive the parcel I sent you?"

"Oh, yes," answered Grenits, "you will find it safe on that little table yonder."

Thereupon Murowski produced his instruments; a couple of thermometers, a hygrometer, an aneroid barometer, a stethoscope, and a small chemical balance.

While he was arranging these, van Rheijn opened the other parcel, which contained a bedoedan and a small box of tjandoe.

"I say," cried van Beneden, who was the first to open the little box, "precious nasty stuff this looks!"

Murowski took the box from him, examined the contents, and then falling at once into a lecturing tone, he began:

"Opium is an amorphous, sticky substance which, being of a gummy nature, is not fissile but plastic. It is of a dark brown colour, possesses a faint sweetish smell, and is somewhat oily to the touch. Its chief constituents are morphine and narcotine, in the absence of these the drug has no value."

"But," interrupted van Beneden somewhat impatiently, "which of us is to submit to the experiment?"

"The best plan to settle that question," said van Rheijn, "would be, I think, to draw lots."

"Very good," put in Murowski, "providing you allow me to stand out, as I shall have to watch the experiment."

"Now, I think," suggested Grenits, "you had better let me make the trial."

"Why you, rather than anyone of us?"

"Why, because, being a prisoner," replied Grenits, "I have plenty of time on my hands to get over the effects of the debauch."

"You are quite right," said van Rheijn, "I never thought of that—I must be at my office as usual to-morrow morning."

"And I," continued van Beneden, "I have to be in court, on Setrosmito's business, you know."

"Of course, of course!" cried all in chorus, "not one of us must, on any account, miss that trial."

"Very good," said Grenits, "we are all agreed then that I am to be the smoker."

"It is very kind of you, Theodoor, to make the offer."

"All right, I am quite ready to begin."

"Very likely," interrupted Murowski, "but that is more than I am."

"No, and I am not ready yet," said Edward van Rheijn.

Thereupon, assuming the most severe professional gravity, the worthy Pole commenced carefully to weigh out the stock of opium, which he found came to 142 grains. This fact he noted down in his pocket-book.

"You had better add," said van Rheijn, "that there are twenty-five matas."

"Twenty-five what?" asked Murowski, again with a puzzled look.

"Twenty-five matas," repeated van Rheijn.

"Matas!" exclaimed the doctor. "What? eyes?"

The general burst of merriment which followed the question served only to augment the doctor's surprise.

"Eyes!" laughed van Rheijn, "no, no, nothing of the kind. The Government table of opium weights runs thus: 1 pikoe = 100 katties, 1 kattie = 16 taëls, 1 taël = 10 tji, and 1 tji = 10 matas, and therefore—"

"All right, all right!" cried Murowski, as he joined in the laugh, "now I see it."

"But, gentlemen," he continued, "we must look sharp, the sun has set."

It was nearly a quarter past six and, in the month of August, the sun in Java sets some time before that hour.

Murowski requested Grenits to have the lamps lighted, and when the servant had brought in the lights, the Pole continued:

"Now then, Grenits, get your clothes off!"

"What is that for?" asked Theodoor.

"My dear fellow," replied the doctor, "I must have you in pyjamas; for I shall have narrowly to watch the action of the chest."

Grenits retired to his bedroom, and in a few minutes returned clad in his ordinary night clothing. The doctor then made him lie down on the divan, he felt his pulse, examined his tongue, sounded him with the stethoscope, and carefully took his temperature. During these preliminaries the countenance of Murowski wore a look of stern solemnity which, no doubt, ought to have impressed the spectators with the feelings of respect and awe due to a high priest of science; but which, unfortunately, only served to excite their merriment. Even Grenits himself could hardly repress a smile.

"What in the world is the good of all that hocus-pocus?" whispered August van Beneden to Grashuis.

"Why are you lawyers," rejoined the other, "always fencing with scraps of Latin? It is the correct thing, I suppose. It is a trick of the trade."

At length Grenits said: "Well, doctor, is my carcase in pretty good order."

"Perfect," replied Murowski, "perfectly normal; I must have a look at the barometer, and then our experiment may begin at once."

The barometer recorded 745 m.m., and the doctor made a note of the reading.

"There, now," he said to Grenits, "I am quite ready—no, no, wait a bit—there is something else. When did you last partake of food?"

"At half-past twelve," replied Grenits, "the usual dinner."

"Thank you," said the doctor, and looking at his watch he continued, "It is now half-past six—just six hours ago. Did you partake of anything in the way of spirits?"

"No, nothing of the kind," answered Grenits, "nothing but a little pale ale."

The doctor then placed his thermometers in position under the patient's arms.

While all this was doing, van Rheijn was busily employed dividing the opium into twenty five equal parts. Then he lit the lamps, and, warming the bits of opium at the flame of the little lamp to make them soft, he kneaded into each of them some very finely cut Javanese tobacco, and then rolled them into small round pills. His friends looked on with some surprise at the dexterity with which he performed these manipulations; for he had not told them that, previously, he had asked Lim Ho to show him how the thing ought to be done. This lesson the wily Chinaman had been only too willing to give him. "Who knows," thought he, with a grin, "perhaps the Europeans may take a fancy to the delicacy." When Edward had prepared his pills, he produced the bedoedan. It consisted of a tolerably thick bamboo stem some nine or ten inches in length, highly polished and of a beautiful light-brown tint. This stem was open at one end and sealed at the other. Very near to the closed end and at right angles to the stem, a small earthenware bowl was inserted into the wood.

"It is a spick-span brand new one, I can assure you," said van Rheijn to Theodoor, "I bought it myself for this very occasion."

"Thank heaven for that!" cried Grenits. "Just fancy if one of those old sots had been sucking and slobbering at it! Bah! it makes me sick to think of it."

"That shows how innocent you are," rejoined van Rheijn, "your real lover of opium, your 'feinschmecker,' prizes an old pipe very highly. When the stem is thoroughly saturated and the bowl thickly encrusted with juice, the smoke must be indeed delicious."

Thus saying, Edward put one of the little pills into the bowl and handed the pipe, thus loaded, to his friend, while he drew the little table with the lamp within easy reach of the smoker.

Grenits lay stretched out at full length on the divan, the front of his kabaai was wide open, so that the action of the chest was plainly visible, and his head rested on a somewhat hard pillow.

"Now," remarked Grashuis, "there is only one thing lacking, and that is the greasy filthy pillow we saw in the den at Kaligaweh."

"Much obliged to you, Leendert," laughed Grenits. "I would not for the world touch the beastly thing—this pillow will do perfectly well."

Thus speaking, he turned his face to the lamp, applied his mouth to the stem of his bedoedan, and, trying to imitate as closely as he could the proceedings he had witnessed at Kaligaweh, he was about to apply the bowl to the flame.

"Hold hard!" cried Murowski, "don't be in a hurry, one moment."

With these words he took Theodoor's pulse and held it for fully a minute looking the while carefully at his watch. Then he once again applied the stethoscope, examined the thermometers, replaced them, and finally, in his notebook he wrote: Pulse 72, respiration 24, temperature 99½.

"That's it," said he, "now then puff away to your heart's content."

With one steady long pull Grenits sucked the flame of the lamp into the bowl. As the opium-ball kindled, a faint sweetish odour began to pervade the apartment, a smell somewhat suggestive of warm blood and treacle.

"Swallow it, swallow it!" cried van Rheijn.

This, however, was more easily said than done. Grenits made an effort to swallow the nasty smoke; but then a violent fit of coughing compelled him to open his mouth and blow out the fumes into the room, augmenting thereby the nauseous smell which already pervaded the apartment.

"Poeah! poeah!" cried Grenits, puffing and coughing.

"What do you feel? What do you taste?" asked Murowski.

"I am half choked with coughing," stammered Grenits, "and I have a nasty sweetish taste in my mouth. I cannot describe it."

This first draw had been a deep one; the madat-ball was entirely consumed; van Rheijn slipped another opium-ball into the pipe.

"Now, this time," said he, "you must try to swallow the smoke; you have done so often enough when you have blown the smoke of a cigar from your nose."

Poor Grenits made another attempt. This time he did actually inhale the fumes and succeeded in retaining them for some seconds, after which he allowed them slowly to curl out at his nostrils.

Dr. Murowski made a note in his pocket-book, pulse 70, respiration 25, temperature normal.

Being asked again what he felt, Grenits answered: "I feel nothing; but the sweet taste has gone and now it tastes rather bitter."

After the third pipe, Theodoor complained that his head felt heavy and said he wanted to go to sleep. This drowsiness seemed to increase with the fourth and fifth pipes; but, as yet, Grenits was well able to resist it. He returned sensible answers to the questions put to him by his friends; but remarked that his faculties seemed to be clouded and that he had to reflect for some considerable time before he could grasp the meaning of a question, and that he could not readily frame an answer. He was able, however, to sit upright, and could even walk up and down the room without support.

Dr. Murowski watched him carefully and after the sixth pipe he found, that the drowsy feeling was still increasing, that the pulse was at 70 while the respiration had risen to 28.

The eighth pipe produced further drowsiness, but yet Theodoor was able to tell the time by the clock.

With the ninth pipe, his speech became thick and his utterance indistinct; and when the doctor pressed him very hard, he said that his tongue seemed as if it were increasing in volume.

After the tenth pipe, the patient began to complain of a bitter taste in his mouth, and said he felt giddy. The doctor at once grasped his hand; but pulse and respiration both remained unaltered.

After the eleventh, Grenits could no longer raise himself unaided from the divan, and, when he tried to walk had to be supported, so tottering and uncertain were his steps.

After the twelfth pipe, which he smoked very slowly, a remarkable change came over the patient. Theodoor was now lying with his eyes closed; but every now and then he opened them and there was now a brightness in his look which offered a strange contrast to his former dull and heavy expression. His sensations, he declared, were highly pleasurable; but he could give no description of his feelings.

"Charles, Charles," he faintly cried, "give us a little music," and he turned slightly to van Nerekool. The latter at once sat down at the piano and began very softly to play Chopin's variations on airs from Don Giovanni. The ecstatic expression on the smoker's face showed that he took in every chord and every note.

"Go on playing," he murmured, as soon as Charles left off, "more music—more smoke—give me the pipe."

This ecstatic state went on increasing with the thirteenth pipe and with it also the craving for opium grew more intense.

Theodoor now began to laugh; he stretched out and waved his arms—the most pleasant pictures were evidently floating through his brain. When Murowski asked him what made him laugh he replied, with a fresh burst of unnatural merriment: "I don't know, I don't know!"

Presently he requested van Nerekool to play him a certain passage from Shumann's Manfred. In this state of ecstasy the patient remained while he smoked his fourteenth and fifteenth pipes. The fixed smile did not leave his features; but now he ceased to reply to the questions of his friends. He also grew restless by degrees and no longer lay still as before.

After the sixteenth pipe Grenits complained of having to leave off smoking while the pipe was being refilled. He grew fretful and found fault with van Rheijn for not having supplied another bedoedan, for then, he said, the experiment might have gone on without interruption. Dr. Murowski observed that the pulse was at 72 and the respiration at 28; that the conjunctiva was much bloodshot and the eyelids heavy and drooping.

After the seventeenth pipe the smoker suddenly started up and attempted to walk; but, after a few steps, fell down and was unable to rise. His friends carried him back to the divan. He begged hard to be allowed to go on smoking and, as the doctor declared there was no danger whatever, the request was complied with.

The eighteenth pipe brought back the state of ecstasy which, for awhile, seemed to have left the patient. Every now and then he opened his eyes wide and seemed to follow some flying image.

With the twentieth pipe these symptoms merely increased, and when Murowski asked him how he felt he replied:

"Oh! I feel so happy; I never felt anything like it before."

The doctor made the following note: Sclerotica much inflamed, pulse 70, respiration 25, temperature 100·04, satyriasis setting in. Upon being asked if he wanted anything, he replied:

"I don't want anything—nothing at all—leave me alone. The pipe! give me the pipe! that Edward, that Edward! does he want the thing to fail altogether?"

The next instant he exclaimed: "Oh! if this be Mohammed's paradise, let me go on smoking for ever! The pipe! the pipe!"

"Is it not high time," asked van Nerekool anxiously, "to put a stop to this? The poor fellow will, I fear, do himself some serious mischief."

"No, no, no," cried the Pole. "Don't be alarmed, I answer for him, there is not the slightest danger. His pulse is perfectly regular, the breathing has quickened somewhat; but there is only a rise of ·3 in the temperature. It would be a pity not to go on now, this experiment is most important to science."

After the twenty-first pipe, Grenits seemed to lose all control over himself. He lay still, almost motionless; but every word he uttered, every look and every gesture betrayed what was passing within. This continued until the twenty-fourth pipe had been smoked. Murowski then again asked him how he felt, and he answered pretty quietly:

"Oh! I am at peace, at rest. Delightful! delightful!"

But this was far from satisfying our Pole. With his right forefinger on the patient's pulse and his left hand spread out on his breast, he kept on asking him again and again, "What kind of feeling is it?"

Theodoor, however, did not reply. By this time he was heaving and panting with excitement. His arms and hands were stretched out clutching convulsively at some phantom of his brain. His face wore a look of unutterable bliss which filled the bystanders at once with amazement and horror.

"Doctor, doctor!" muttered van Nerekool, "let us put an end to this. Look at him, look at him. It is disgusting!"

But the Pole would not give in.

"There is no danger, none whatever!" he cried; "we must go on now, we must go on!"

With the tough tenacity of the man of science bent upon fathoming some natural phenomenon, he eagerly watched Theodoor's slightest movement. He was desperately anxious to make the patient speak out. "Grenits!" he cried, "Grenits, do you hear me; tell me, do you hear me?"

Then he forced up the eyelids, and with his finger sharply filliped his nose as he kept on crying, trembling with impatience: "Do you hear me, Grenits, do you hear?"

Grenits muttered a few incoherent words as he restlessly tossed about on the divan.

"Do you hear me?" persisted the doctor. "Tell me, can you understand?"

"Oh, yes, yes," at length muttered Grenits, "do leave me alone!"

In his eagerness the doctor bent over his patient, he did not for an instant take his eyes from his face. Just then the friend was transformed wholly into the man of science who, entirely mastered by the passionate desire of unravelling some secret of nature, might become capable of practising vivisection even upon his fellow-man.

"Oh do tell me," passionately implored the doctor, "do tell me what you feel!"

"What I feel?" muttered Theodoor vaguely. "Oh it is delightful, delightful—more delicious than—"

"This is too bad!" shouted van Nerekool, "abominable! I can't stand this any longer!" and, snatching the pipe out of Grenits' hand, he stamped on it with his foot. Then he seized the box in which there remained but a single pill of opium and violently flung it and its contents out of the window.

"That's right, quite right!" cried Grashuis and van Beneden in a breath.

"It is a pity, a thousand pities," complained Murowski.

But even he had very soon to change his tone, as the condition of Grenits now began seriously to alarm even the medical man. The smoker's pulse had fallen to 62, and his respiration to 24, while the temperature had risen to 101·40.

Grenits moreover was now growing very restless, and was pouring forth a torrent of libidinous and incoherent ejaculations. His eyes were bloodshot, his face much swollen, his skin was hot and dry, while the hands were damp with clammy sweat. Incessantly he kept on clamouring for opium. "The pipe, give me the pipe! van Rheijn, the pipe!" he almost yelled, and this amidst a string of loose and frantic exclamations.

Murowski, now beginning to fear that the experiment might have been carried too far, endeavoured to make him drink some of the strong coffee which had been kept ready for the purpose, by pouring it down his throat with a spoon. He bathed his head with iced water, and every now and then, made him sniff strong smelling salts. Thus, with considerable difficulty, the doctor at length succeeded in somewhat quieting his patient. The coffee, especially, seemed to have a soothing effect. At first Grenits violently resisted all attempts to make him swallow it; but presently, of his own accord he began to ask for it, and the beverage had the most sobering effect. Gradually the excitement began to abate, the patient's voice became more natural and subdued, and his utterances less wild. At length Grenits fell into a deep sleep.

Murowski took out his pocket-book and wrote: Pulse 70, respiration 24, temperature 100.

"Normal," said he with a sigh of relief, "quite normal! However, I shall not leave him to-night." The gaoler was very easily persuaded to allow the doctor to remain with his patient for that night, and Grenits slept for thirty-three hours. When he at length awoke he found that, with the exception of a feeling of exhaustion and a pretty severe headache, he was none the worse of his opium-debauch. Even these unpleasant sensations, however, left him as soon as he had taken a bath, and then he became ravenously hungry so that his attendant had some difficulty in serving him quickly and plentifully enough.

Three days after these events Murowski was on his way to his new station. It was his intention to expand his notes into a full account of what he had witnessed, and to send his paper on the effects of opium smoking to one of the scientific publications in Germany.

The experiment in the prison at Santjoemeh had one good effect, at least, upon those who were assembled to witness it: it served namely, to confirm the opinions they already held with regard to the use of opium. It would not be true to say that van Rheijn had ever stood up as a defender of the use of the drug; yet he had always striven to find some argument in palliation of the Government system; but now even he was completely converted.

With poor Theodoor Grenits the events of that evening were, for a long time, a very sore point; and he never could bear the slightest allusion made to his antics while under the spell of the poppy-juice.

"May I be hanged!" he cried, "if ever again I touch a bedoedan, however seductive and pleasant may be the images it calls up." And then, turning to his friends, he said, "Gentlemen, I beg you will do me the great favour of never, in the slightest manner, alluding to the past; and," continued he enthusiastically, "let us now join hands and solemnly declare war—war to the knife against the opium trade."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN THE PANDOPPO OF THE REGENT.

THE day which followed the opium experiment described in the last chapter, promised to be an interesting one to the inhabitants of Santjoemeh. On that day, Setrosmito, the father of baboe Dalima, who had for months been lying in gaol on a charge of having murdered a Chinese bandoelan in the execution of his duty, and who had been accused also of opium-smuggling, was to be brought to trial.

The evidence had already been taken, and the witnesses on both sides had been examined. The prisoner confessed that he had, with his kris, taken the Chinaman's life; but he stoutly denied that he had been guilty of smuggling. All Santjoemeh had turned out, that is to say, the whole European population; for it was known that August van Beneden would conduct the defence. As our readers know, the young lawyer had already appeared as counsel for baboe Dalima; but at her trial he had merely watched the proceedings in behalf of his client, and had no opportunity of showing his powers as an advocate. Thus the speech he was expected to deliver in defence of Setrosmito, might be looked upon as virtually his maiden-speech.

In social circles, however, and on several minor occasions, August van Beneden had given evidence of much ability and considerable readiness of speech, and thus the good people of Santjoemeh were looking forward to the coming trial as to a rare intellectual treat.

But that was by no means all. It was further rumoured that the unfortunate bandoelan had lost his life in consequence of his misconduct towards the little daughter of the prisoner. Now, the public at Santjoemeh knew pretty well what excesses the bandoelans used frequently to permit themselves to take in these domiciliary visits for opium; and thus expected that some spicy details would be forthcoming at the trial. It was, moreover, confidently expected that in his devotion to Themis, the young lawyer would lay his finger heavily upon the crying abuses of the infamous opium traffic, that plague-spot of Javanese society and that disgrace to the European conquerors of the island.

No wonder, therefore, that long before the time appointed for the trial, the pandoppo of the Regent's house in which the court was to sit, was crowded to its utmost capacity. Even ladies appeared in the audience, and foremost among these was fair Laurentia van Gulpendam. As a rule, no ladies ever appear at these native trials; but, on this occasion, the full-flavoured particulars which were sure to be revealed, might perhaps account for their presence.

At all events, the numerous staff of servants looked on in amazement at this unusual concourse; for generally the public is, on such occasions, conspicuous only by its absence. These attendants found it as much as they could do to provide seats for all the company, and though there always is an abundant supply of chairs in every Regent's house, yet on this occasion, a sufficient number of seats could hardly be mustered.

Had it been evening, and had the numerous lamps which swung from the roof of the pandoppo been alight, one might have imagined oneself at some festive gathering, or rather, one might have thought, that an exhibition of juggling or other such-like entertainment was about to take place; for, at one extremity of the spacious hall, there was a raised platform three steps above the level of the floor. On this stage was seen a long table covered with a green baize cloth on which were displayed a thick book and a number of 'pièces de conviction;' and at which several chairs were placed in order. A police oppasser, who, judging from his demeanour, was fully aware of the importance of his office, was mounting guard at the table, evidently posted there to keep the profane vulgar at a respectful distance. Had any unruly spirit attempted to approach, he would no doubt, with a noble flourish, have dragged the rusty bit of iron which he wore by his side from its scabbard.

Pending the entrance of the judges, the crowd tried to pass the time as agreeably as it could. Greetings were exchanged, jokes circulated freely, the people laughed and chatted, and, in fact, behaved, in that temple of Justice, precisely as they might have done at a music-hall during the interval.

"Good morning, Mrs. van Gulpendam, do you intend to be present at our session?"

The speaker was Mr. Thomasz, deputy clerk of the court. He had strolled in *en amateur* to have a look at the proceedings; for the chief clerk himself was on that day to officiate, and Thomasz meant to make the best of the opportunity thus offered him of paying his court to fair Laurentia.

"Good morning," replied the Resident's wife as she held out her hand. "Yes, I have come to have a look. I never have been present at one of these trials, and am rather curious to see what they are like. This case will be an interesting one, I think?"

"I think it will, madam," replied Thomasz; "but for my part, I consider the examination of the witnesses much more entertaining."

"I daresay," said Laurentia; "but—that horrid murderer—they are sure to find him guilty, are they not?"

"I am not so sure of that, madam."

"You are not? Why not?"

"No, indeed, I am not. The head djaksa has indeed got up a splendid case for the prosecution, there is not a loop-hole in it; but ever since our Residents and Assistant-Residents have ceased to preside, and the duty has devolved upon professional lawyers, we seem to be be under the influence of a kind of morbid philanthropy—and, it would not at all surprise me if the scoundrel got clean off, especially—"

"Ah yes," exclaimed Laurentia, "I know what you would say: especially since a European has undertaken the defence of that Javanese scoundrel. It is perfectly unheard-of—monstrous! But, tell me, who pays that counsel, do you know, Mr. Thomasz?"

"Hush! madam, that's a secret."

"A secret!" cried Laurentia, "you must keep no secrets from the wife of your Resident. You seem to know all about it. Come tell me what you know."

"Let us go on the platform then," said Thomasz with a faint smile, "no one will be able to overhear us up there."

They walked up the steps, went to the table, and made a pretence of examining the objects displayed upon it. The policeman on guard, of course, took good care not to interfere with the njonja Resident and the assistant registrar of the court.

"Now then," said Laurentia in an undertone, "you may speak out. Who pays that lawyer?"

"A company, madam," was the reply.

"A company! What? of Chinamen?" cried Laurentia impatiently.

"I did not say so, madam," replied the deputy clerk with a smile and a slight bow.

"What company then?"

"Of Europeans, madam."

"Oh ho! you know them. You need not deny it; I see it in your face."

"Hush, madam," whispered Thomasz, "there are a couple of ladies coming near," and then aloud he added: "Yes this is the very kris with which the deed was done—you see the wavy blade is stained with blood—that black spot—"

Mrs. van Gulpendam seized the weapon.

"Give me their names," she whispered as she stooped forward over the table to take it up.

"I know but one of them—van Nerekool."

"Van Nerekool—still that van Nerekool," hissed the fair woman between her clenched teeth. And then, turning to the pandoppo, she said to one of the ladies who had by this time mounted the platform:

"Look here, Henriette, just look here—this is the kris with which the murder was committed." The policeman in charge of the table seemed inclined to step forward to forbid the others to approach; but a haughty look from Laurentia restrained him.

"Is that really the kris?" asked Henriette.

"Yes," exclaimed Laurentia, "look, you! that's how it was done—slash across the throat!" She accompanied these words with a sweep of the formidable weapon which made both the ladies start back in terror.

"A magnificent woman that Laurentia!" said a young man in the body of the hall. "Just look at her attitude, look at her features, look at that hand as she grasps the dagger! What a lady Macbeth! what a perfect instep!"

"Aye, aye," quoth another, "she is posing, she knows—she feels—that we are admiring her."

"What are you frightened at?" continued Mrs. van Gulpendam, "see here, that spot is the blood of the victim, is it not, Mr. Thomasz?"

"Disgusting!" cried both ladies in a breath.

"How can you touch it, my dear madam?"

"Touch it? why not?" scornfully replied Laurentia as she flung back the kris rattling upon the table. "Why not touch it? the thing doesn't bite."

"Of course not, my dear," said Henriette; "but the mere thought that it has murdered a man!"

"Pooh! a Chinaman!" cried Laurentia.

"But a Chinaman is a human being," objected her friend.

"I suppose so," was Laurentia's disdainful reply.

"It is well that Lim Yang Bing or Lim Ho are not by to hear you," said Thomasz forcing a laugh.

"Oh that is a different matter altogether," said the arrogant woman.

"They are opium-farmers," cried Henriette.

"They are millionaires!" added her friend.

The two ladies uttered these exclamations almost simultaneously, with an indescribable tone of sarcasm peculiar to their sex. Laurentia fully understood the taunt and felt it too; but she gave no sign of displeasure.

"Ah yes," continued Henriette following up her pleasant little home-thrust. "Now you mention their names, what has become of the two Chinamen. I don't see them. Yonder is the Chinese captain and Kam Tjeng Bie the wealthy merchant; but I can't see the two opium-farmers."

"They will take good care," added the other lady, "not to show their noses here."

"I daresay," carelessly remarked Laurentia, "that they find plenty to do getting ready for the wedding."

"Is not the murderer," asked Henriette, "the father of baboe Dalima who accused Lim Ho of—?"

"My dear Henriette," hastily interposed Mrs. van Gulpendam, "that is the merest tattle—in our gossiping Santjoemeh you ought not to believe one tenth part of what you hear."

"But," continued she rather hurriedly as if anxious to change the subject, "but, Mr. Thomasz, what kind of gollokh is that yonder on the table—that looks as if it were blood-stained too—did the murderer use that thing also?"

"Oh no, madam," replied the assistant-clerk, "that is nothing but chicken's blood."

"Chicken's blood?" inquired Henriette with a laugh.

"Yes, dear madam, we call that the gollokh soempah."

"Indeed, and what may that mean?"

"We might translate it by the 'oath-knife,'" replied Thomasz; "it is, in fact, with that instrument that the Chinese take an oath."

"That's interesting! did you ever see it done, Mr. Thomasz?"

"Oh yes, madam, very frequently."

"Do tell us all about it," cried Henriette, "how is it done?"

"It is as simple a ceremony as possible, ladies. The witness who is about to be sworn, accompanied by a Chinese interpreter, and one of the members of the court, walks up to a block of wood. Then the gollokh is placed into his hand and with it he chops off the head of a black chicken. Nothing more, and nothing less. It is an utterly meaningless performance, and, at first sight, it is simply ludicrous."

"But why must the chicken be black, Mr. Thomasz?" asked Henriette.

"That is more than I can tell you, madam," replied he. "You are aware, I suppose, that white is the mourning colour in China."

"Oh, yes, I know that; but—a black chicken? There must be some hidden meaning in that," mused Henriette.

"There may be, madam," replied Thomasz; "but I have never been able to discover any, though I have frequently asked interpreters and even Chinese chiefs about it. There exists, however," he continued, "in China another manner of taking an oath, the significance of which is, perhaps, more obvious. But it is used only on special and very important occasions."

"Can there be any question of greater moment," asked Henriette, somewhat sharply, "than that of speaking the truth before a judge?"

"Certainly there may be, madam," was the reply.

"More important do you mean to tell me, than of giving solemn testimony upon which may depend perhaps the life or death of a human being?"

"Undoubtedly, madam," said Thomasz.

"Well!" cried Henriette, "I should like to know what questions those may be!"

"To give you only one instance," replied Thomasz, "the great oath, the solemn oath which the Government requires to be taken when a man is made a Chinese officer."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Henriette with a laugh, "do you call that so very serious a matter?"

"And then," continued the assistant clerk, "on certain occasions, though rarely, the great oath is administered in civil cases, where the interests involved are very considerable."

"Ah, now I understand you! When it is a question of £ s. d.," laughed Henriette; "but, pray, tell us something about that great oath."

"With pleasure, madam, only I am afraid I do not know very much about it. The rites observed on such occasions are borrowed from the ceremony with which the oath is administered in China to princes and high state officials on their appointment. I will, in as few words as possible, try to describe to you what takes place. The witness first writes down the evidence he intends to give or the promise he intends to make, on a strip of red paper, and then he confirms the truth of his words by calling down upon himself the most fearful curses should his evidence prove untrue, or should he fail to carry out his engagement. This strip of red paper the witness next carries to the temple, and solemnly spreads it out upon the table of offerings, between a number of burning candles, some bottles of wine and some confectionery, which are destined to be gifts or offerings to the idol. While this is going on the priests are screeching forth a form of prayer, at certain passages of which a bell is violently rung. Thereupon the witness, in a loud voice, reads out what he has written on the paper, the priests the while burning incense. Finally, the red paper is held to the flame of one of the candles, and, having been thrown down on the table, is allowed to burn until it is reduced to ashes. This concludes the ceremony. I know, ladies, my description is most imperfect; but I hope that I have succeeded in giving you some notion of this very curious solemnity."

"Much obliged to you, Mr. Thomasz," said Laurentia, holding out her hand to him as, with haughty glance, she surveyed the company assembled in the pandoppo.

"I wonder whom she is looking for?" whispered one of the young men in the body of the hall.

"Not for me I fear," sighed another, "perhaps—"

"The gentlemen of the court!" bawled a police oppasser, much in the tone of a French huissier when he shouts, "*La cour, messieurs!*"

The name of the individual who was supposed to be the object of Laurentia's solicitude remained unspoken.

Just then, out of one of the side buildings which could be seen from the pandoppo through the intervals between the blinds, there appeared two European gentlemen, two Javanese chiefs and two Chinese officers. These formed a kind of procession and slowly marched towards the pandoppo. Having entered the hall they ascended the platform, and took their seats at the table, on the chairs placed ready for them.

At the head of the procession walked Mr. Greveland, the successor of Mr. Zuidhoorn and president of the court. After him, came Radhen Mas Toemenggoeng Pringgoe Kesoemo, regent of Santjoemeh; Radhen Pandjie Merto Winoto the patih, and babah Tang Ing Gwam the Chinese major—these three were members of the native Council. Then followed Mas Wirio Kesoemo the head djaksa, and behind him came the clerk of the court, while Hadjie Moehammad Kassan, the panghoeloe or native priest, closed the procession.

The president was in his judicial robes of office, while the clerk of the court appeared in black frock-coat and white trousers. The Javanese members wore, of course, the national costume, which consisted of a short jacket with stiff gold-embroidered collar over a similarly embroidered vest, with the finely stitched sarong wrapped in neat and narrow plaits round the waist. On their heads they wore the ordinary scarf; but in addition to this they also wore the kopja, an ugly and shapeless head-gear, looking like a bit of stove-pipe ornamented with narrow gold lace.

The Chinese major was in full Mandarin's dress, the most conspicuous part of his attire being a kind of tabard of light blue cloth, on which, in front and behind, were richly embroidered in gold a pair of monstrous dragons. His head was covered with a stiff cap of light blue cloth. This cap had a somewhat high crown, on the top of which, surmounting a little tuft or tassel, shone a large blue gem of extraordinary lustre.

The panghoeloe was clad in a sombre-looking cassock reaching down to his heels. He was remarkable chiefly by a turban of prodigious size, which, by its magnitude and colour, proclaimed that the man had visited the tomb of the prophet and was therefore a Hadjie or pilgrim. In his hand he held a book which looked much worn and soiled. This was the sacred book—the Koran.

On the steps leading to the platform were seated several Javanese youths dressed in the national costume but without the kopja. These were the mantries, generally young men of good family, and even of noble birth, who were present to listen to the proceedings, and thus to qualify themselves for future appointments. They sat on the steps with their legs crossed before them, and each had on his knees a writing tablet, on which he was prepared to jot down whatever remarks he might consider valuable enough to be thus rescued from oblivion.

Mr. Greveland took the chair at the middle of the oblong table. On his right hand sat the regent and on his left the clerk of the court. Next to the regent sat the djaksa and on his right again sat the panghoeloe. The clerk of the court had on his left the patih, and after him came the Chinese major. All these places were allotted to their several occupants, in accordance with the rules of the strictest etiquette, to which Eastern nations always attach the utmost importance.

Just after the president had taken his seat, August van Beneden made his appearance in his barrister's gown; and, by the chairman's direction, sat down at the end of the table by the side of the Chinese major. At that moment the pandoppo of the regent's house offered an interesting and most curious spectacle. It was a wide roomy shed the lofty roof of which was supported by eight pillars, and completely open on all sides. In order to temper the glare of the sunlight, and also to exclude the prying looks of the public outside, the spaces between the pillars were hung with green kreés or mats, while the members of the court had the further protection of a canvas screen stretched behind them. Behind the judges some Javanese servants were squatting. These men bore the pajoengs of the Javanese chiefs, and though these umbrellas were closed, yet their bearers held them aloft in such a manner that they could plainly be seen behind the backs of their masters. As the native court was then sitting; and taken as typical of the entire judicial system as regards the native inhabitants of the island of Java, it presented a strange combination of those three leading principles which the Dutch Government has, sometimes in greater sometimes in lesser degree, but always very cleverly, managed to unite. First there was the European law represented by the person of the President; in the next place the native usage was respected which demands that both the judges shall be Javanese chiefs or nobles of the highest rank; and in the third place there was the Mohammedan law represented by the panghoeloe whose office it was to enforce due respect for the injunctions of the Koran.

Between the platform and the first row of chairs there was a considerable open space which, however, was not protected by any kind of railing. To the right and left of the platform stood a pair of native police oppassers in their bright yellow uniform and with side-arms dangling from bright yellow belts. The poor fellows cut a sorry figure as they stood there, they were quite taken aback at the sight of so large a crowd.

Fair Laurentia had taken her seat on the middle chair of the first row. As njonja Resident this place of honour belonged to her, and by her side she had placed two of her most intimate friends. Close around these clustered the most fashionable and important inhabitants of Santjoemeh, or such as considered themselves the most important; and behind these again came the miscellaneous crowd which filled the pandoppo from end to end. The conversation, however, now that the judges had entered, was carried on in whispers or in a low undertone.

Edward van Rheijn, Charles van Nerekool and Leendert Grashuis, we hardly need say, were present in the third or fourth row of chairs among a number of their young friends and acquaintances—the *jeunesse dorée* of Santjoemeh. Thus they had an excellent view of the proceedings.

"Look at that Thomasz," said van Rheijn, "what an ass the fellow is making of himself with Laurentia!"

"Yes, yes," quoth Grashuis, "he is making hay while the sun shines."

"I don't know so much about that," remarked one of the young men present, "it seems to me that just now he is pretty well at home at the Residence."

"There are very queer rumours afloat about him," whispered another.

"Rumours!" said van Rheijn testily, "why, in Santjoemeh, the air is always full of rumours. What would Santjoemeh be without its *chronique scandaleuse?*"

"If people will behave themselves in that way!"

"Yes, and if appearances are all against them!"

"Indeed," said van Rheijn tartly, "am I to suppose that, where a woman's good name is concerned, you would go by appearances?"

"They say that M'Bok Kârijâh has been employed."

"Oh! if that filthy hag has a finger in the pie, then—"

"They say!" exclaimed van Rheijn contemptuously, "they say!—and pray who are *they?*"

"Well—everybody—"

"At all events I am not one of them," replied van Rheijn.

"No more am I," added Grashuis.

"Hush," whispered van Rheijn, "I am sure Laurentia can hear all we say; just look how she pricks her ears."

"How very dignified van Beneden looks in his gown," said Grashuis anxious to change the subject and slightly raising his voice.

"I don't see it," returned van Rheijn; "he looks for all the world like an umbrella in its case."

At that moment fair Laurentia turned and cast her eye over the group of young gentlemen seated behind her. They all greeted and bowed. Van Rheijn, however, had a gracious smile all to himself—it might have been perhaps in acknowledgment of his comparison of van Beneden with the umbrella.

"Oh, you sly fox," whispered one with a nudge, "that is why you took me up so sharply just now? eh?"

"Do shut up!" said van Rheijn, "I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself for talking such nonsense!"

"Have you received an invitation yet?" asked Grashuis, wishing to turn the conversation into another channel.

"What invitation?"

"To Lim Ho's wedding party."

"Yes, I got one the other day," said one.

"And so have I," said another.

"That is a curious custom," remarked van Nerekool, "for the bridegroom to give the wedding party."

"Yes," added another, "it is so totally different from what one sees among Western people."

"Different!" exclaimed van Rheijn, "of course it is—it is quite consistent with everything else in China. With them everything is upside down. Their mourning colour is white and blue is half-mourning. Their ladies wear trousers and the men carry fans. Such things as knives, spoons and forks they leave to us barbarians, while they manage very cleverly to whisk down their food with a pair of chop-sticks. They hold that descendants can ennoble their ancestors so that one may become a count or a baron after one's death. They pay their doctors so long as they keep well; but the moment they fall sick they stop payment. What can you expect from such people—? surely you may let them hold their wedding feast at the bridegroom's house instead of the bride's!"

A general laugh greeted this whimsical sally which had by no means been uttered in an undertone. Mrs. van Gulpendam joined in the merriment and rewarded the speaker with another friendly nod.

"You see! you lucky dog! you are decidedly in her good books."

"Hush, gentlemen! here comes the murderer."

"What? unfettered?"

"Yes, the law demands that an accused man shall appear free and unfettered before his judges."

"But it does not forbid a couple of constables to stick close to his elbow."

"Hush!"

Mr. Greveland had repeatedly struck the table with his wooden hammer.

"Usher," he said at length with much dignity, "you must see that silence is kept in court."

The man thus addressed was a sjenjo or half-caste—he rushed up and down the pandoppo in frantic endeavours to enforce the order he had received, "Hush, hush, silence! Silence, ladies and gentlemen!" he bawled at the top of his voice, thus making more noise than all the company put together.

Again the hammer came down, and the president himself called: "Silence."

"Silence!" shouted the usher imploringly, as he stretched out his arms and looked as if he were going to swim, or was trying to lay a tempest.

At length he succeeded in controlling those unruly tongues. One of the very last to give way was Laurentia—"who had a right to interfere with her—the Resident's wife? Those gentlemen on the bench are always giving themselves such airs!"

Presently, however, even her chatter ceased. Once again the president brought down his hammer.

"The session is opened," said he; "constables bring the prisoner forward!"

One of the oppassers hereupon drew Setrosmito to the foot of the steps and made him squat down in front of the table. The poor fellow looked a wretched object indeed. The months he had passed in prison had effectually done their work upon him. He was frightfully lean, and the warm brown colour of his skin had turned a dusky grey. His long lank hair, which here and there straggled from under his head-dress, had turned grey—nay white. As he advanced he looked timidly around him, he cast one imploring glance at van Benededen, who gave him a friendly nod and a smile of encouragement, and then, submissively, he squatted down in the spot to which the policeman pointed.

When first Setrosmito came forward some one uttered a loud heart-rending shriek of Ah God!—this cry was followed by the usher's cry for silence.

At the back of the pandoppo several Javanese women were huddled together. They were the friends of Setrosmito's wife, who had accompanied her into the court. She it was who had uttered the wail which made all the spectators turn their heads. She had not been able to restrain her feelings at the sight of the wretched object in which she could hardly recognise her husband. Van Nerekool at once hurried up to the poor creature, he got one of the regent's servants to give her a kind of stool, and then he tried to quiet her.

"You must keep quiet, M'Bok Dalima," said he, "or else you wont be allowed to remain here."

The poor sobbing woman buried her face in both her hands.

On all sides were heard murmurs of "The murderer's wife! Poor woman!"

"Silence!" roared the usher.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SETROSMITO'S TRIAL.

AS soon as the commotion produced by that lamentable cry had subsided, Mr. Greveland began to question the prisoner.

"What is your name?" he asked.

The djaksa interpreted the question to the accused man in Javanese.

The prisoner with his head bent forward and his eyes steadfastly fixed on the floor replied:

"Setrosmito, kandjeng toean."

"Where were you born?"

"At Kaligaweh, kandjeng toean."

"How old are you?"

"I don't know, kandjeng toean."

The djaksa turned to the clerk of the court and said, "Put him down about forty years of age."

There was, in reality, but little need for all this interrogatory; for the particulars had been already noted down during the course of the preliminary examinations. The questions were, in fact, put merely *pro forma*.

"Where do you live?" continued the president.

"In the prison, kandjeng toean," innocently answered the prisoner.

"Aye! but I mean before you went to prison?"

"In the dessa Kaligaweh, kandjeng toean."

"Setrosmito," continued the president, "do you know why you have been brought here before us?"

"Yes, kandjeng toean."

"Let us hear it then."

"They tell me I have smuggled opium, and that I have killed a Chinaman," quietly replied the Javanese, without so much as raising his eyes from the floor.

A murmur of indignation ran through the pandoppo at the apparent callousness of the reply.

"Silence!" cried the president.

"Silence in the court!" vociferated the usher.

"Do you plead guilty to these charges?" asked Mr. Greveland.

The djaksa interpreted the question; but the prisoner hesitated—he seemed not to know what he ought to say. He cast a furtive sidelong glance at August van Beneden, who reassured him by saying:

"Speak up, Setrosmito, speak up, tell the simple truth."

"No, kandjeng toean," said he, "I am not guilty of smuggling. I never touch the bedoedan. I have killed a Chinaman because he ill-treated my child."

The Javanese spoke in a very low tone of voice—he was abashed before that large audience and before his chiefs. He spoke moreover in the Javanese tongue, which hardly any one present could understand, so that his answer produced no impression whatever.

"Now, listen attentively, Setrosmito," said the president. "The charges against you, your own statements, and the evidence of the witnesses, will be read out to you."

"Yes, kandjeng toean."

Thereupon the clerk of the court rose, and in the sing-song monotonous tone of voice peculiar to his class, began to read all the depositions and the whole body of evidence which the preliminary examinations had produced. He read very fast, very indistinctly, and in so low a tone of voice that not a soul in the pandoppo, not even the president himself, who was seated close beside him, could understand what he said. The prisoner, of course, could not catch a single word; for the papers were all drawn up in Malay, a language of which the simple dessa-labourer knows little or nothing. From time to time this dreamy flow of words was interrupted by the djaksa, whose duty it was to translate to the prisoner the more important parts of the case. But even the interpretation was got through at such a pace that it was very doubtful whether the prisoner was any the wiser for the djaksa's translation.

He sat squatting on the floor without changing his attitude, and kept his eyes rivetted on one spot; his hands, fumbling the while at the skirts of his jacket, betrayed his extreme agitation. At every explanation of the djaksa, whether he understood it or not, he mumbled the invariable Javanese answer:

"Yes, kandjeng toean."

This reading of the evidence was a most dreary and tedious business. Even the members of the council at the table kept up a whispered conversation, which the president had repeatedly to interrupt with an impatient gesture and a stern look of displeasure.

The audience, however, did not confine themselves to mere whispers. No one spoke out aloud; but gradually there arose a humming and buzzing—an indescribable rumour, broken now and again by some lady's giggle—which sadly interfered with the majesty of the law.

In vain did the usher exert the full power of his lungs. His shout of "silence" produced its effect for the moment; but it was only for the moment. The instant after the universal buzzing began again as if a huge swarm of bees had taken possession of the pandoppo.

"What an insufferable bore that clerk is to be sure!" simpered Mrs. van Gulpendam.

"He leaves the reading to his nose," remarked Mr. Thomasz.

"Mind your chief does not hear you," said one of the ladies.

"Pray don't tell him!" cried Thomasz, "he does not know he talks through his gable—if he did, he might try and improve."

"Be quiet, Mr. Thomasz," said Laurentia, with a burst of laughter, "you really must not make us laugh so."

"What? I, madam?" asked the clerk.

"You? Of course. The Resident calls you a dry comical fellow."

"How, madam, do you mean to say the Resident applies such terms to me?"

"Yes, he does—don't you like them?"

"Madam," replied the assistant-clerk, "professionally I cannot say that I do. Just fancy, ladies," he continued, turning to the others, "a comical clerk, who ever heard of such a thing?"

He uttered these words with a serio-comic air, so irresistibly droll, that the ladies fairly shook with suppressed laughter.

"Oh—do hold your tongue, Mr. Thomasz!" Laurentia at length managed to say, "you see how savagely Mr. Greveland is glaring at you."

"What a time that mumbler takes to be sure!" said a voice almost aloud in the centre of the pandoppo.

"If one might only light a cigar to while away the time," said another.

"Or get a glass of bitters!"

"I was asking an oppasser just now to fetch me a glass of beer—my throat is as dry as a lime-kiln," said another voice in an audible whisper.

"Well—and did you get it?"

"Don't I wish I may get it? 'Not allowed, sir,' was all I could get out of that canary-bird, who looked as black as a three days' west monsoon."

"Shall we go to the club, it is close by?" asked another.

"Yes, if I thought that muttering would last much longer."

"Silence! silence!" shouted the usher, "respect for the court!"

That respect for the court was all very well; but the good people of Santjoemeh had gathered together for the sake of amusement, and they were being bored almost to death.

At length the clerk had got to the end of his dreary tale—at length the djaksa had, for the last time, said to the prisoner: "Do you understand, Setrosmito?" And at length, for the last

time, the latter had replied in his monotonous drone the same words:

"Yes, kandjeng toean."

Then came the usual shuffling of feet and a general murmur of satisfaction which, however, the usher soon managed to subdue.

As soon as silence had been restored, the head djaksa rose from his chair and, in his capacity of public prosecutor, he began to open the case for the Government.

His speech was remarkably well put together, and worked out with much skill and care; but it could have an interest only for those who knew nothing of the other side of the case.

It was, in fact, little more than a statement of what had occurred, strictly on the lines of the report of the bandoelan Singomengolo.

The public prosecutor took the case of opium smuggling as conclusively proved. He dwelt at great length upon the cunning displayed in hiding the forbidden wares under the pandan-mat of the couch—the opium itself and the box which had contained it lay before him on the table as convincing proofs of the truth of what he advanced.

Then, in very forcible words, he went on to dilate upon the craftiness of these opium smugglers; and tried to show how, in their endeavours to cheat the revenue, they gave evidence of much cleverness; but generally over-reached themselves and proved, by the tricks they employed, their utter want of honesty and moral sense.

Mas Wirio Kesoemo waxed well-nigh eloquent when he pointed out how the passion for opium was, hand over hand, gaining ground in Java; and how this debasing passion was promoted and fostered chiefly by the abominable smuggling trade. He dwelt, in glowing terms, upon the absolute necessity of repressing, by every means the law would allow, that dirty underhand traffic which was the fruitful source of so much misery.

"Picture to yourselves," he cried, "the amount of injury which this nefarious trade is inflicting upon the realm beyond the ocean, upon all India, and especially upon our own beloved island of Java. Think of the millions which are lost—the millions!—I might say the tens of millions, and then calculate the amount of good which these tens of millions might produce if they were allowed to flow quietly and without check into the national treasury!"

At these words the djaksa, who up to that time had been addressing the members of the council, turned to the public, knowing well that this *argumentum ad crumenam* would tickle the public ear. And he was not mistaken. The audience consisted for the most part of Dutchmen, and the tinkle of these tens of millions had a metallic sound which was strangely fascinating to the hearers. A distinct murmur of approbation arose, many a head nodded in silent assent and many a voice muttered:

"Hear, hear! If we could but be delivered from that abominable smuggling!"

These evident tokens of sympathy did not escape the djaksa's watchful eye, and Mas Wirio Kesoemo did not let so favourable an opportunity pass without expressing the fervent hope that the judges would not fail, by their sentence in the present case, to crush the foul reptile which battened upon the national prosperity. He called upon them, therefore, to pass upon the prisoner, who not only sat there accused of the heinous crime of smuggling; but was charged also with the additional offence of murder, the heaviest sentence which the law would allow. By doing so, he added, they would earn for themselves the cordial thanks of the island of Java, and establish a claim upon the gratitude of the entire Dutch nation.

For a moment it seemed as if the greater part of the company assembled in the pandoppo, would have given vent to their feelings of satisfaction by cheering and clapping of hands —one cry of "bravo!" was distinctly heard; but the usher repressed all such manifestations with his repeated shout of "Silence—silence in the court!"

The head djaksa now proceeded with the second part of his case against Setrosmito, that, namely, of having murdered a Chinese bandoelan; a charge which was inseparably connected with the former one of opium smuggling.

The entire assembly hung breathless on his lips, as he described how Setrosmito had resisted the searching of his house; how, when the fatal box had been discovered, he had hurled an opprobrious name at Singomengolo and called him a "dirty dog;" how he had, thereupon, seized his kris and how, when the chief bandoelan fled back in terror, he had flung himself upon an inoffensive and defenceless Chinaman, and had drawn the wavy blade of his knife across his throat, while a stream of blood deluged murderer and victim alike. This description, graphic almost to brutality in its details, made a powerful impression upon the audience. One of the ladies present screamed and fainted away, and had to be carried off insensible. This episode caused considerable commotion, and Setrosmito cast an anxious glance behind him to see what was going on.

"Silence! silence!" bawled the usher.

As soon as order had been, in some measure, restored, Mas Wirio Kesoemo proceeded to dwell on the increasing temerity of the opium smugglers, who scrupled not to take a human life rather than risk the loss of their smuggled wares. He insisted upon the necessity of inflicting the extreme penalty for the protection of the police in the execution of their arduous duties; and he ended his speech by demanding that the murderer be condemned to death by hanging, or, if the defence could establish any extenuating circumstances, that the sentence should be at least twenty years of penal servitude with hard labour.

A deep silence reigned in the pandoppo as the djaksa resumed his seat, one might have heard a pin drop, so intensely was that frivolous crowd impressed by this fearful demand for a human life. A kind of spell lay upon all, every heart seemed compressed as in a vice. A general sigh of relief was heard when the president broke the silence:

"Setrosmito," asked Mr. Greveland, "have you heard what the public prosecutor has said?"

The prisoner looked up with a puzzled expression at the speaker; but he did not answer a word. The entire case had been conducted in Malay, of which he did not understand a single word. The expression of the poor fellow's face showed that plainly enough. The president repeated his question, which the djaksa, thereupon, interpreted to Setrosmito. The prisoner cast one look upon August van Beneden, and upon a nod from the latter, answered:

"Yes, kandjeng toean."

"Have you anything to say in reply?" asked the president.

Another look at his counsel, and then the prisoner answered:

"No, kandjeng toean.'

A cry of indignation and horror arose in the pandoppo at the seeming callousness of the answer.

"Silence, gentlemen! Silence in the court!" shouted the usher.

As soon as he could make himself heard, Mr. Greveland said:

"I call upon the counsel for the defence."

"At length!" muttered Grashuis, with a deep sigh.

"Now we shall hear something very fine!" cried Mrs. van Gulpendam, with a sneer; but in a voice quite loud enough to reach the young lawyer's ears.

Van Beneden very calmly rose from his chair, wiped his forehead, and then, in a clear voice which could distinctly be heard through the entire pandoppo, he said:

"The trial which is now occupying the attention of this honourable court is one which is indigenous to the soil of Java. I might say, indeed, that in no other spot in the world could such a case arise. There can be nothing simpler, nothing more plain than the demand of the prosecution! Opium has been smuggled, some one must be punished for it. A man has lost his life, some one must hang for the murder. Undoubtedly the law must have its course, and the criminal ought to be punished. We are living here in the East, in the home of the law of retaliation—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth! This, gentlemen, is a hard law unworthy of our Western civilisation; but against it we have the right of inquiry, and our milder code allows every accused man the right of defence. It is of this right of defence, that, in behalf of the unhappy man sitting there at your feet and awaiting his fate at your hands, I now intend to avail myself.

"Now, if the facts were really such as the prosecution has represented them to be—why then there would be nothing for me to do than to commend the prisoner to the clemency of the court, or rather I should say, that I would not, in that case, have undertaken at all the defence of a cause which my conscience could not justify. I take, therefore, a totally different view of the matter; and am prepared to lay before you the grounds upon which I have arrived at a wholly different conclusion. I beg that you will lend me your attentive hearing.

"But, before entering into the details of this case," continued the young lawyer, in a voice which clearly betrayed emotion, "allow me to pay my tribute to the zeal, the devotion, and the undoubted ability of a man concerning whom I must not speak without reticence, inasmuch as I am bound to him in the straitest bond of friendship.

"Mr. William Verstork was controller of the district of Banjoe Pahit when the facts occurred which now claim our attention. Independently altogether of the action of the Government, he undertook the task of continuing the investigations which he had initiated. The result of his inquiry he has submitted to the proper authorities. I ask, why were not these papers laid before us? Allow me, gentlemen, to pass very lightly over this most important omission. I could not enter into that subject without stirring up a pool of iniquity which is immediately connected with the opium question; and I freely confess that I shrink from thus occupying your valuable time. For the defence of the unhappy man for whose interests I am responsible, it will suffice if I now tell you that the documents to which I allude exist beyond the possibility of doubt or denial; and that I have here, lying on the table before me, the authentic copies properly attested and legalised by the Governor of Atjeh and by the Chief Justice at Batavia.

"You all," continued van Beneden with a courteous gesture, addressing the public as well as the bench, "you all know William Verstork, and I would not even mention the noble qualities of that zealous public servant—there would be no need of doing so—were it not that our president, Mr. Greveland, has but lately arrived at Santjoemeh. The interests of my client demand that I should clearly point out to him that the writer of these documents is universally known as an upright man, who, in his official capacity, has won for himself the esteem and affection of all, natives as well as Europeans, that have come into contact with him. That he is a most dutiful son who, for the sake of his mother and his younger sisters and brothers, has made the greatest sacrifices; and that, before this large audience I assert, without the slightest fear of contradiction, that a more single-minded and honourable man has never trodden the soil of Netherland's India."

A burst of applause, cheering and clapping of hands followed immediately upon this general appeal. Mrs. van Gulpendam sat gnawing her lips with suppressed rage, while the noise drove the usher to the verge of frenzy.

At length, by dint of much hammering, Mr. Greveland obtained silence, he rose and said:

"Much as I appreciate this tribute of affection, this spontaneous testimony to the merits of a distinguished public servant; yet I must warn the public against such demonstrations either of approval or disapproval. Should they be repeated it will be my duty at once to clear the court. Mr. van Beneden, I beg you to proceed."

August had made the most of this interruption, he had wiped his forehead and refreshed himself with a draught of iced water. He continued:

"After the fatal evening, William Verstork repeatedly visited

Kaligaweh. He thought he thoroughly knew Setrosmito and remembered the well known lines of Racine:

> ' Un jour ne fait point d'un mortel vertueux
> Un perfide assassin, un lâche meurtrier.'

But, for all that he determined to sift the case to the very bottom. He made minute inquiries on all sides, and, as the result of his investigation, he found that the man who is now sitting there before you crushed under the load of so terrible an accusation, has ever been an irreproachable husband, a tender and devoted father, an industrious hard-working labourer —that he is, in fact, one of those quiet and submissive villagers of which our Javanese population is chiefly composed, and which make it possible for an entire race, which may well be called the quietest and meekest on earth, to submit to the cruel fiscal yoke we have imposed upon it.' I have here, lying on this table before me, the sworn testimony of the wedono of the district of Banjoe Pahit. He states that on a certain occasion, when a loerah had to be appointed for the dessa Kaligaweh, the man most eligible for the post was this same Setrosmito, especially because he was known never to touch opium; but that he could not recommend him for the appointment, because the man could neither read nor write.

" Now, gentlemen, I ask you, how comes it to pass that a man bearing so excellent a character should be brought up here before you as an opium smuggler and a murderer? An opium smuggler! At those words your very looks betray what is passing in your minds. You know well enough what is going on in this residence of Santjoemeh. You turn away in disgust at the mere mention of the word 'opium smuggler!' But, let me ask you, upon what grounds has the prosecution founded this most serious charge? Why, upon no grounds whatever! The prosecution has not even attempted to bring forth any proof of the prisoner's guilt. Their case rests entirely upon the unsupported word of one of the opium farmer's bandoelans—upon the bare assertion of a vile wretch whom public opinion holds up to public execration as capable of the lowest and most infamous perjury. Yes, gentlemen, I repeat it most emphatically, this charge rests upon nothing whatever but upon the bare word of Singomengolo, and upon that little box which lies there in evidence before you on this table.

" But, you all must remember, it is not so very long ago, that, on this very same table, we had before us a number of

those little boxes, all of them the property of that same bandoelan; and that, on that occasion, you had to acquit the daughter of the prisoner who was also charged with smuggling; who was charged with smuggling, mind, by that same Singomengolo. And how did he attempt to prove that charge? Why, by swearing that he had seized upon her person a box precisely similar to that which you now see before you. Again I ask you, what proofs have we that this box was discovered under the pandan-mat of the couch in Setrosmito's dwelling? We have none! You hear me, I repeat that word, we have absolutely no proof of the truth of that bare assertion. But, on the contrary, for the defence, I have the clearest possible proofs that it never was there at all. We rely on proofs which are absolutely incontrovertible. And here, gentlemen, allow me once again to turn to the sworn evidence of my friend William Verstork.

" 'When one of the Chinese bandoelans, accompanied by a couple of police oppassers, presented themselves at the door of Setrosmito's house for the purpose of making a domiciliary visit, no opposition whatever was offered to their searching the place. The only precaution taken was that they were themselves submitted to a search before entering the premises. On that occasion no opium, nor any vestige of opium was found; not even under that very pandan-mat on the couch. The two oppassers and the witnesses Sidin and Sariman, who were present at the visitation, have expressly sworn to that fact. Sariman indeed has sworn most positively that the pandan-mat was twice lifted up, and that the Chinaman had most minutely examined the pillow which lay upon it.'

" That I think is plain enough, gentlemen, is it not?

" But now, allow me to continue with Verstork's sworn declaration.

"'Very shortly after they had left, Singomengolo himself appeared to search the house. He refused point-blank to submit to the usual body search; whereupon Sestrosmito protested and said: 'In that case, no doubt, opium will be discovered in my house. I know all about these dodges.' I have the proofs of all this here before me signed by the Kabajan of the dessa.

" And, of course, opium *was* found, gentlemen. It was discovered in the very spot where the Chinese bandoelan, who was no fool either, had looked twice without making any discovery. That again is clear enough, I think.

"Opium smuggler! The court will understand that I fling the odious accusation far, far away from me. Not indeed because the charge has not been legally proved; for I know that in these opium-cases very curious evidence is often admitted; but because my client is innocent, absolutely innocent, of any such offence; because he is the victim of one of those detestable conspiracies which, as every one well knows, are commonly resorted to when some obnoxious individual has to be removed or some sordid wretch thirsts for revenge.

"Opium smuggler! Yes, the prosecution has dwelt at considerable length and with considerable eloquence upon the millions, the tens of millions, of which this illegal traffic is robbing the public exchequer.

"As the Public Prosecutor made his fervent appeal, every heart was thrilling with emotion, though it may not perhaps have been of a very noble kind. And, gentlemen, he was perfectly right. Millions, yea tens of millions are lost to the revenue! But they are not lost in the manner the prosecution has so graphically described; they are not conveyed away in little boxes which hold but a minute quantity of the drug. The millions of which we heard so much just now—Ah, gentlemen! need I tell you who are the men that thus defraud the revenue? Why your own hearts have already pronounced their names, they are trembling now on your very lips. Those smugglers are not poor dessa-folk, they flaunt their ill-gotten wealth boldly in the face of our good people of Santjoemeh; and can afford to keep Singomengolos to remove out of their path any unfortunate creature who may stand in their way. Shall I mention these names which are even now on every lip? Why should I do so? An Attorney General once ventured to lay his finger on the plague-spot and to denounce these criminals to the Governor General. What did he gain by it? That is the question I would ask you?"

The young barrister here paused for a few moments, to allow these last words, which he had driven home like a wedge, time to sink into the hearts of his hearers. In the pandoppo the deepest silence reigned. The assembled crowd sat breathless listening to every word as it fell from van Beneden's lips. On all those faces there was but one expression, and it said plainly enough "Aye truly! that is the state of things which the accursed opium-monopoly has created in this island." After a short pause, August continued:

"I now pass on to the second and far more terrible charge which has been brought against my client. Shall I be able to purge him of that accusation as I know that I have cleared him of the former? Here there is no question of denial. The facts are all plain enough and are all frankly admitted. The fatal deed has been done, the grave has closed over the ill-starred victim; and the weapon, the kris with which the fatal wound was inflicted, lies there before you on the table.

"The prosecution has given us a shockingly graphic description of the terrible occurrence, and has painted, in the most vivid colours, the manner in which that kris was slashed across the throat of the unhappy bandoelan. It is not difficult to see why so much stress was laid upon the bloody scene, and why we had the loathsome details so forcibly placed before us. But yet, gentlemen, I venture to think, that the cause of my client has been benefited rather than damaged by this vivid word-painting. For the more painful the impression produced, the more forcibly must the question arise: 'How was it possible that a creature of so quiet and meek a nature could have been goaded to a deed of such unbridled fury?' Again I appeal to the testimony of William Verstork, and I think it well to tell you that I also have personally and independently made a careful investigation into all the facts of this most painful case; and the results of my personal inquiry I will proceed to lay before you. Yes, gentlemen, I also shall have to be graphic and realistic; but remember that I am merely following the example set me by the prosecution. Yes, gentlemen, I also shall have to enter into harrowing and revolting details; but I shall do so only because the cause for which I am pleading compels me to that course."

And now the young lawyer displayed a power of eloquence such as had never before been heard in Santjoemeh—never perhaps in all Dutch India. He made use of words not only but also of gestures. He "acted" as Mrs. van Gulpendam spitefully remarked to one of her friends.

Yes, he did enact before his spell-bound audience that tragic scene, building up the entire drama, as Cuvier out of a single bone would construct the entire skeleton of some antidiluvian monster. He made them see how the opium-hunters penetrated that peaceful dwelling. He made them hear how Singomengolo haughtily refused to submit to any examination. One could behold as it were the ruthless ransacking of all the poor furniture, one could hear the children crying and wailing at the licentious conduct of the ruffians who had respect neither for age nor sex. The entire audience shuddered at the "Allah

Tobat," the frenzied cry of the desperate mother, and one could see also how, at his wife's bitter cry, Setrosmito's eye had, for a single instant, glanced away from Singomengolo, and how the latter had profited by that instant of distraction to draw forth the box of opium with a gesture of insolent triumph. How rage and indignation wrung from the unhappy father an abusive epithet which was answered immediately by a blow in the mouth. How, stung to madness at that insult, Setrosmito grasped his kris; how at that fatal moment the cry of little Kembang had drawn the attention of the father to his poor little girl; how he had seen her exposed to the hideous outrages of the Chinese bandoelan. All these events the eloquence of the advocate conjured up, as it were, before the eyes of his hearers. At the words, "Let go!" uttered with incomparable energy, the audience seemed to see the father flinging himself upon the astonished bandoelan, who, dazed by the very imminence of peril, had not sufficient presence of mind to desist from his outrageous conduct, and thereupon resounded the terrible words, "Die then like a dog!" in a tone which filled the entire pandoppo with shuddering horror.

Even Setrosmito, who profoundly ignorant of the Dutch language did not understand a word of his counsel's speech, and had for some time been sitting vacantly staring before him, even he, at length, grew attentive, lifted his eyes inquiringly to the young man's face, and then kept them riveted upon him with concentrated intensity. No! the rich flow of words had no meaning to him whatever; but the gestures he could interpret quite plainly. He saw the whole tragedy unfolded before his eyes—he saw his outraged child—he saw the hand of the speaker go through the very action which cost a human life. With eyes glittering with excitement he nodded again and again at his counsel, while thick heavy tear-drops kept trickling down his cheeks. "Yes, that is how it happened," he murmured audibly amidst the deep silence to the Javanese chiefs while he stretched out his arms imploringly towards them.

"And," continued van Beneden, with still increasing fervour, "if now, after having thus laid before you the bare facts of the case, if now I turn to you with the question: 'Is that man guilty of murder—who slew another—yes; but who slew him in a moment of ungovernable rage, and in defence of his innocent child?' What must be your answer? Is there anyone here who would cast a stone at him who drew the weapon—and who used it—to preserve his own child from the foulest outrage that can be perpetrated in a father's sight? Aye but, 'this is a question of opium-police!' If I could, for a moment, harbour the thought that anyone present under this roof would, for the sake of the opium question, desire to hear a verdict of guilty returned against this man—why then, in sheer despair, I should be driven to exclaim: 'Woe to the nation that contains such a wretch—woe to the man, who, for so sordid a principle, would tread Eternal Justice under foot—such a nation must be near its fall!'"

The effect of these words was simply indescribable, a shudder seemed to run through the assembly.

"And now," continued the young man turning to the prosecution, "go on your way, pile one judicial error upon another, erect for yourself a pedestal so lofty that the cry of the unhappy victim of the opium traffic—that insatiable Minotaur—will not reach your ears! The time will come, when, from above, retribution will overtake you. The day will dawn when the Dutch nation will awake out of its lethargy and sweep you and your opium-god from the face of the earth.

"As for you," continued August van Beneden turning to the members of the council and speaking in a more subdued voice, but yet with a persuasive energy which it was impossible to withstand, "as for you, gentlemen, place yourselves, I pray you, in the position of that unhappy man whose eyes were just now dropping tears as I sketched, in a manner which could reach his comprehension, the terrible deed of which he is accused. Picture to yourselves the hours—the days of mortal anxiety he has passed through, and is even now passing through as his fate is hanging on your lips—then you will in some measure, be able to realise the unutterable joy with which he presently will hail the verdict which you will deliver—a verdict of 'not guilty' which will restore to his wife and family a man who can so sturdily stand up in their defence."

Having thus said, van Beneden resumed his seat, or rather fell back exhausted in his chair. It was getting late, the sun was high up in the heavens, and an oppressive heat weighed like lead upon the assembled crowd. For a few moments, absolute silence ensued, the silence of emotions too deep for utterance and which was broken only by a sob here and there. But then, a tempest of cheering arose which made the very roof tremble, and amidst which the stentorian voice of the usher was completely drowned.

This applause and general enthusiasm continued for a considerable time, and was not hushed until the president had repeatedly threatened to have the court cleared.

The prosecution was crushed, utterly annihilated. Feeling that his cause was lost, the djaksa attempted to have the trial adjourned; but Mr. Greveland saw plainly enough how very undesirable such an adjournment would be; and he wisely refused to grant it.

Thus compelled there and then to get up and reply, Mas Wirio Kesoemo could not rise to the level of his subject. He mumbled a few words which did not awaken the slightest attention—he said something about the necessity of vindicating the action of the police, he uttered a few incoherent sentences, he stammered, he drawled, he repeated himself over and over again, and finally sat down without having produced any impression whatever. As soon as he had ended, the president called upon the defence to exercise its right of reply.

With a gesture of lofty disdain, van Beneden refused to avail himself of his privilege:

"No, no, Mr. President," he said, "anything I could now add would but lessen the impression made by the prosecution. It is to the weakness of the charge brought against him, rather than to the power of the defence, that my client must owe his acquittal."

After a moment's pause the president turned to the panghoeloe and asked him what law the sacred book prescribed.

In a sleepy tone of voice the latter replied, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—the man has taken a life—the man must die."

A shriek resounded in the pandoppo, a Javanese woman had fainted away.

The members of the council thereupon retired to their consulting room. After a while they returned into court and the clerk proceeded to read out an elaborate judgment, wherein, after a number of "seeing thats" and "whereases," the verdict of "Not Guilty" on both counts was at length pronounced. Then the real storm broke loose. A great number of the audience rushed up to van Beneden and warmly congratulated him on the victory he had just gained. The president, far from trying to repress the general enthusiasm, now cordially joined in it. August raised Setrosmito from the floor and whispered some words in his ear which were immediately afterwards affirmed by the Regent himself.

The poor Javanese cast one single look at his young champion, he pressed his hand to his heart and uttered a few incoherent words. But that one look was sufficient for van Beneden, it was the overflowing of a grateful heart. At the very bottom of the pandoppo one solitary voice cried out:

"Great is the justice of the whites!"

A few moments after, the pandoppo was deserted. Said Grashuis to his friend as he was walking home with him: "By Jove, old fellow, you have knocked the wind clean out of me—I am still under the spell. That is natural enough; but what I want to know is how you managed to get the native chiefs on your side?"

"Very simply indeed," replied the other, "I called upon them yesterday and read my speech to them in Malay."

"Come, come, that's cute!" laughed Grashuis. The young lawyer, however, did not tell his friend that, at the conclusion of that visit, the old Regent of Santjoemeh had pressed his hand and whispered to him:

"You are a noble fellow!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

A MEETING IN THE KARANG BOLONG MOUNTAINS.

ON the western slope of the Goenoeng Poleng—that mighty mass of rock which forms the nucleus, as it were, of the Karang Bolong range running along the South Coast of Java, and not far from the dessa Ajo there stood a modest little hut. To the traveller approaching from the North or from the South, it was completely hidden by the walls of rock which towered around it. Steeply rising ground but scantily covered with thin grass and prickly shrubs, shut out all view from the back of the little cabin. From either side also nothing could be seen but the rocky slopes, with here and there a small patch of arable ground. But the front of the hut offered a prospect which, for loveliness and variety, could hardly be equalled, certainly not surpassed; and which amply made up for the dreariness of the view on the other sides.

From the small front gallery or verandah the incline ran down pretty swiftly, and displayed to the eye a panorama which might in truth be called magnificent. Immediately beneath this verandah lay the mountain-slope; at first bald and bare, with huge weather-worn boulders scattered about here and there, and a few stunted shrubs. Between these a narrow pathway ran winding down. In its tortuous course it seemed to rival the brook, as, twisting and bubbling and splashing and foaming, it went merrily and swiftly dancing down its fantastically-cut bed. As gradually the slope ran down to the valley, the vegetable kingdom began to assert itself more and more. At first there appeared dwarf trees with curiously twisted trunks and strangely gnarled branches, these, in their turn, gave way to the more luxuriant representatives of the realm of Silvanus, and these again gradually merged into a rich plantation of fruit-bearing trees, above which the tall cocoa-nut palms reared their feathered heads waving and nodding to the breeze. Beyond this, at the foot of the mountain, lay the little dessa Ajo, snugly embowered in a mass of glossy foliage. Very pleasant to look at from the eminence were the dwellings of the native villagers with their neat brown roofs and bright yellow fences peeping here and there through the rich verdure, reflected in the waters of the Kali Djetis, which forms the western boundary of the dessa; and which, at that point, makes a majestic sweep before emptying itself by a wide mouth into the Indian Ocean.

The view of that ocean still further enhanced the beauty of the grand panorama which lay stretched out in front of the little hut. On a fine calm day the deep-blue expanse of water extended far—endlessly far—away to the horizon, glittering under the rays of the tropical sun like a metallic mirror; while numerous fishing boats, with their white but quaintly-shaped sails, hovered about the Moeara Djetis, and skimmed like birds over the glassy surface. When, however, the South-East trade was blowing stiffly, and the flood-tide helped to raise the waves, the aspect of the ocean was entirely changed. Then not a single boat was to be seen; but heavy breakers came tumbling in, and, as these reached the mouth of the river, and met the body of downflowing mountain water, they would tower up and roll along steadily for awhile as a huge wall of solid blue, then curl over into mighty crests, and finally break into a foam-sheet of dazzling whiteness. This magnificent spectacle, a kind of prororoca on a small scale, could be watched from the verandah in its minutest details.

The hut itself was but a very poor little dwelling; constructed, as those places generally are, of such primitive materials as bamboo and atap. It consisted indeed merely of four walls and a roof. It had a door in front and behind, which gave access to a small verandah, while, in the side-walls, two square shutters did duty for windows. Whether or not the space within was divided into separate apartments we cannot tell. There are secrets into which a novelist must not venture to pry; and there are feelings which, even he, must know how to respect. It may be his duty—his painful duty—to introduce his readers to an opium-den, and reveal to them the horrors it conceals, if, by so doing, he may reasonably hope to do something to cure a crying evil; but he ought not, without sufficient reason, to invade the sacred rights of privacy by throwing open to his readers a cottage wherein—

But, modest as was the little building which stood there lonely and deserted on that mountain slope, and poor as was its outward appearance, yet there existed a very marked difference between it and the other cabins, the dwellings of the dessa people, far down at the foot of the mountain. The difference consisted herein, that it was scrupulously neat and clean, and bore no trace whatever of the slovenliness and general want of cleanliness which is too often the characteristic of the houses of the ordinary Javanese villager. The Javanese, indeed, are an Eastern race. As such they have certain points in common with all the other branches of the great Oriental family, whether we call them Moors, Hindoos, Arabs, Chinese, Egyptians, Berbers, aye, or even Greeks, Italians, or Spaniards. The entire house from top to bottom, from the roof of fresh nipah leaves to the hedge of yellow bamboo hurdle, looked bright and clean. The small plot of ground in front was carefully laid out as a trim garden with well kept paths and pretty bits of green lawn. The flower-beds also, and the ornamental shrubs, which grew around, spoke of careful tending, while an impenetrable hedge of the *conyza indica* enclosed the entire nook. At the back of the house lay a patch of grass, evidently used as a drying ground, for several articles of female apparel, such as slendangs, sarongs, and the like, were hanging on ropes stretched over bamboo poles, and fluttered in the breeze.

In the front gallery a single flower-pot was conspicuous, a thing very seldom found in any Javanese house, in which flowered a magnificent "Devoniensis" in full bloom; and close by stood a native loom, at which a young girl was seated cross-legged on a low bamboo stool.

Wholly intent upon her work, she is plying the shuttle with nimble fingers. As novelist, we are, to some extent, a privileged being, and may venture to draw near though we would not intrude into the little house. The girl is so deeply absorbed in her task that we have leisure, unperceived, to examine the further contents of the verandah; but specially to watch its solitary occupant. That she has for some considerable time been hard at work, the reel tells us; for it already contains quite a thick roll of tissue, the result of her day's toil; so does, likewise, the spinning-wheel, which stands hard by, ready to supply the shuttle with thread as soon as it may need replenishing.

As regards the girl herself, she is, just now, bending forward over her work so that we cannot catch even a glimpse of her features. Her dress, consisting of a simple jacket of light-blue cotton, and the sarong made of some dark-coloured material, with a gay flowering pattern, proclaim her to be a Javanese. So also do the hands and such parts of the face and neck as we are able to see, by their brownish yellow tint. So again does the hair which is combed away smooth from the forehead and rolled up at the back of the head in a thick heavy kondeh or plait.

Aye, but—that kondeh, however carefully it may have been plaited and fastened up, yet it at once awakens our curiosity. Little rebellious locks have here and there strayed away, and very unlike the stiff straight hair of full-bred Javanese beauties, they curl and cluster lovingly around the plait, while the shorter hair under the kondeh also forms crisp little curls which cast a dark shade over the light-brown neck.

"Might she be a nonna after all?" we murmur inaudibly.

Our suspicion is strengthened when, by the side of the little stool, our eye lights upon a pair of tiny slippers. These slippers are not remarkable in any way, they are of the simplest make and wholly devoid of ornament; but it strikes us at once that in Java girls or women hardly ever wear such things, and then—more remarkable still—their size and shape point to the fact that the owner's feet in no way correspond to the broad, splay feet of the natives.

As we stand wondering and losing ourselves in surmises, the weaving girl very slightly changes her position, and one snow-white toe comes peeping out from under her sarong. The startling difference of colour betrays the secret at once: She is a nonna!

Wholly unconscious of our proximity the girl looks up and casts a single glance at the fair view stretched out before her—she utters a deep sigh and—

"That face," we murmur inwardly, "where have we seen that pretty face?"

We have, however, no time to collect our thoughts, for, the next moment as the young girl is again bowing her head to resume her work, a quick light footstep is heard on the path which leads to Ajo. The girl looks up, evidently scared at the unusual sound, she peers anxiously forward and then, almost bereft of the power of speech by the suddenness of the surprise, she gasps forth the cry, "Dalima!"

Yes, it is indeed Dalima who, with nimble step, has crossed the garden and is now running up to the verandah. The weaving-girl starts up from her stool, and before her unexpected visitor has time to mount the three steps, the pair are locked in each other's embrace and forming, as it were, but one exclamation we hear the words:

"Nana!"

"Dalima!"

Now the mystery is cleared up, now we recognize at once both the one and the other. That weaving girl is Anna van Gulpendam and the other is poor Dalima whom we followed in her anxious and painful search as far as Karang Anjer when we lost sight of her until now.

"Where have you come from?" asked Anna, as again and again she clasped the Javanese girl to her breast.

"To-day I came from the dessa Ajo," archly replied Dalima.

"What brought you there?"

"Well, I came from the dessa Pringoetool, that's where I was yesterday."

"But," continued Anna, "what business had you there?"

"The day before that," resumed Dalima not heeding the interruption, "I was at Gombong and the day before that again at Karang Anjer."

"At Karang Anjer?" exclaimed Anna. "What induced you to go there?"

"To look for my Nana," was the reply.

"To look for me? Is that why you have come all the way from Santjoemeh? Have you undertaken so long a journey to look for me?—and in your condition too!"

Anna spoke these last words with some hesitation, while the furtive glance she cast at the poor girl's figure left no doubt as to her meaning.

"Yes, Nana," replied Dalima very quietly and without the least trace of confusion. "As soon as ever I left the prison, thanks to the aid of the young judge," continued she, as she fixed one penetrating look upon Anna who felt the blood fly up to her cheeks at the words, "I went to look after my mother. Thanks again to toean Nerekool, I found her and the children well provided for. My next thought was for my Nana. The toean had told me that the nonna was no longer staying at Karang Anjer but had left, and had vanished without leaving a trace behind her. I thought I could guess why. I knew how lonely, how forsaken, how utterly miserable my dear Nana must feel. An irresistible longing came over me—the longing you know of a young woman in my situation—" she added with a faint sad smile, "to go at once and look for Nana so that I might be of some service to her. I started and—"

"Does toean van Nerekool know of all this?" asked Anna much alarmed.

"No, Nana, he knows nothing whatever about it."

"You did not tell him what you were going to do?"

"No, Nana, I did not."

"Might you not perhaps have dropped some hint to Mr. van Nerekool, or may be to your mother? Do, Dalima, try and remember!"

"No, I have not given toean Charles the slightest hint of my intention. I told my mother that I was going to seek for you."

"Where?" asked Anna.

"Well, Nana, at Karang Anjer."

"But you knew that you would not find me at Karang Anjer?"

"Oh, I knew that; but I wanted to see Mrs. Steenvlak. I thought she would be sure to tell me where you had gone."

"Did you go to Mrs. Steenvlak?" inquired Anna.

"Yes, Nana."

"And—?"

"I could learn nothing from her. The njonja confessed that she knew where you were; but she refused to tell me—she said she had promised not to let anyone know."

Anna drew a deep sigh of relief.

"But how then did you manage to find me, Dalima?" she asked.

"Well, Nana, how shall I tell you that? It is such a long story. I have been wandering about in all directions, I have made inquiries everywhere. I asked at the posting-houses, at the loerahs of each dessa I passed through. I questioned the gardoes and the stall-keepers on the road. In fact I asked everywhere and everybody. In my wanderings, at length I happened to come to the dessa Pembanan."

"The dessa Pembanan!" cried Anna in the greatest agitation.

"Yes," resumed Dalima, "that's where I found the first trace. You took a cup of coffee there at a stall while you had to wait for the pole of your sedan to be repaired."

Anna glanced down uneasily at her yellow-stained hands.

"Oh! it is no use looking at your hands," continued Dalima with a smile. "The old stall-keeper has sharp eyes and the stain could hardly deceive her. She guessed at once that you were either a nonna or a princess."

"Well, go on!" sighed Anna.

"You asked her how far Pembanan was from the dessas Sikaja and Pringoetool—did you not?"

"Yes, that is so," replied Anna.

"Very well, then, that clue I have followed, up hill and down dale."

"Poor, poor dear girl!" cried Anna, as with tears in her eyes she again clasped Dalima to her breast. "Poor child! such a journey, and in your condition, too! Yes, now I see how worn and weary you look!"

"Oh, that's nothing!" cried Dalima cheerfully, "that's nothing, I am strong enough, Nana, don't trouble yourself about that.

"At Pringoetool," she continued, "I got further information. There they told me that you had gone on to the dessa Ajo. When I got there I found the very sedan in which you had travelled—it was stowed away in the loerah's grounds—and they told me that you had a house built for yourself up here—How very pretty!"

As she said this Dalima looked around; and an involuntary sigh escaped from her lips, a sigh which contrasted strangely with her spoken words. The Javanese girl could not help comparing this wretched little tenement with the stately Residential palace at Santjoemeh.

Hitherto the conversation had been carried on standing, the girls half leaning upon, half embracing one another. Said

Anna, who perfectly understood the meaning of that sigh and wished to break the train of Dalima's thoughts:

"Come, let us sit down, you must be dead-tired, poor Dalima."

So saying she resumed her seat on the little bench while Dalima, as in days gone by, squatted down on the mat at Anna's feet and laid her head lovingly in her mistress's lap. Then the conversation flowed on as briskly as before.

"No, Nana," said Dalima, "I am not the least tired. I arrived yesterday morning, very early, at Ajo and have had plenty of time for rest."

"But now," resumed Anna, "do tell me something about yourself, about your own affairs, about the trial and all that."

Thereupon followed the story with which our readers are acquainted. We need hardly add that in the telling of it van Nerekool's name was by no means forgotten. Dalima's deep gratitude to her benefactor would not allow her for an instant to neglect his interests. It even seemed as if that gentleman's name was introduced into her story more frequently than the narrative strictly required. So much so that Anna could not help saying:

"Will you assure me, will you swear, that it was not at Mr. van Nerekool's suggestion that you have undertaken thi journey in quest of me?"

"Yes, Nana, I will swear it," replied Dalima readily and with the utmost candour.

"And now," continued Anna, "you must make me another promise, and that is that you will never in any way whatever, let *him* know that you have succeeded in finding me."

Dalima made no reply. For a few moments she hesitated.

"Now listen to me, Dalima," resumed Anna very firmly, "if you will not make me that promise, and promise it most solemnly, then we must part. You will have to leave me and I shall go elsewhere. Heaven only knows where I shall go to!"

One instant the Javanese girl looked up at her companion incredulously—then seeing that Anna was in downright earnest she exclaimed:

"Not stay with you, Nana! Oh! do not say so. I who have travelled so far to be with you. You cannot mean it. Not stay with you? But that can never be. I have left my parents, my friends, my home, my all—only to be close to you—and now you talk of parting!"

The poor child could get no further; uncontrollable sobs stifled her voice.

"No, no!" cried Anna, who was in reality no less deeply moved than her companion; "no, no, very far from it. Above all things I wish to keep you here with me; but you must promise that you will not let anyone know where I am hiding—will you promise that?"

Dalima flung herself weeping into her mistress's arms:

"You are so lonely here, so miserably poor!" she sobbed.

"Oh, that is nothing," cried Anna, "never mind that; I have got used to it."

"He loves you so dearly, so tenderly," pleaded the baboe.

"Not another word on that subject, Dalima," said Anna, very sternly; "you cannot possibly understand how insurmountable a barrier there exists between Mr. van Nerekool and myself. There can never be a question of marriage between us, let me tell you that once and for all."

The baboe made no immediate reply, but went on sobbing and weeping as if her heart would break.

"Will you make that promise, Dalima?" insisted Anna.

"I owe him so much," sobbed Dalima, "I am so anxious to make him happy."

"You would be doing him the greatest wrong, Dalima."

"Wrong?" cried the baboe, "how so? by bringing him to you; oh, Nana!"

"Once again, I say not another word on that subject," cried Anna; and then, taking her companion's hand she continued: "Now, Dalima, give me your hand—so, that is right; now you will give me your promise, will you not?"

"It makes my heart ache to think of it," sobbed Dalima, "but if you will have it so, I must obey. I give you my promise."

"That's a good girl," said Anna cheerfully, but with a painful smile. "Now I am glad that you have come, for you will be able to help me, oh! ever so much. Look what a splendid striped material I have here on the loom."

"Do you make those things, yourself, Nana?" asked Dalima in pitying accents, "you, the daughter of a kandjeng toean Resident?"

"Now, Dalima," said Anna sadly, "that is another subject you must never mention. Not a soul knows me here. They do not so much as suspect that I am a white woman. They take me for a Solo princess who has been banished by her father—you told me so yourself—Oh! there are such funny stories about that, the one funnier than the other. You see that name of poetri is of the greatest use to me. The good dessa-folk look upon me as a kind of supernatural being and it protects me from all danger. Why even the old woman who sells my goods takes me for a relative of the Queen of the South, and can get much better prices for me than the things would otherwise fetch."

"Do you sell those 'kains' you make, Nana?" exclaimed Dalima, folding her hands in sorrowful wonder, "you, the child of a kandjeng toean?"

"But Dalima," replied Anna, with a smile, "that child of a kandjeng toean, as you call her, must eat like other mortals. Come, I must get on with my work, we have wasted too much time already in talking. That kain polèng mas has been ordered and I must get it done as soon as possible."

So Anna set to work again at the loom. Dalima, for a little while, sat watching her with tearful eyes; but presently she jumped up, took the spinning-wheel and placed it close to the loom so that they could continue their conversation without allowing their hands to be idle, and then began industriously to spin. So clever did she show herself at the wheel that Anna gave her an approving nod and said:

"That's right; now I shall have some real help and we shall get on famously. Nothing kept me back so much as that continual spinning every time my spool was empty."

"Oh, but," said Dalima, with a smile, and not without a touch of pride, "I can do a good deal more than spinning. You will see I can take my turn at the loom as well. I am a particularly good hand at painting on linen."

"Indeed, I am glad to hear that; then you will be of the greatest use to me; for I must confess I am as yet rather awkward at it though I have improved very much since I began. Before we go and get dinner ready I must show you some of my productions in that line."

Thus chatting, the girls went on working diligently for another couple of hours until it became time to go to the kitchen. In that department also, everything was poor enough. It required no very elaborate cookery-book to prepare their simple meal. Dalima would not allow her Nana to have any hand whatever in the cooking. She took the basket of raw rice, ran to the brook which flowed hard by, thoroughly washed the grains until the water ran off clear through the basket. Then she put the koekoesan on the fire in a dangdang, wrapped a little salt fish with herbs and Spanish pepper in pisang leaves to make pèpèsan ikan, and roasted them slightly over the glowing coal fire. Next she toasted a few strips of meat and had everything ready long before the rice was done.

"Now, Nana," she asked as she looked around, "where is our table and the table-linen? I want to lay the cloth."

"You forget, it seems, Dalima, that I have turned Javanese. If I wish to remain unknown, I must conform, in every respect, to the manners and customs of our dessa-people. There is my table and these are my knife and fork."

Thus saying, Anna pointed downwards to the pandan mat which covered the floor and then held up her taper fingers.

Dalima heaved a deep sigh.

"But, Nana," she asked, "can it be necessary for you to work and to live thus? Have you then no money at all?"

"Money!" replied Anna, who retained all her pride in the midst of her adversity, "I have plenty of money, I am very well off, I might indeed call myself rich for one in my position. But you must not forget that I am in hiding; and that if I did not work and did not live exactly like the natives, they would begin to suspect me and then my hiding-place would very soon be discovered. Moreover, who can tell what the future may have in store; the day may come when that money which I now so carefully hoard, though you may perhaps think me stingy, may be of the greatest use to us?"

"Oh, Nana!" cried the baboe, as she strove to put in a word. But Anna would have no arguments.

"Come, come," said she, "let us change the subject. While the rice is boiling, come and see how I have been getting on with my painting."

She took Dalima into the back-gallery where stood several frames on which were stretched the tissues she had woven and which showed the process of painting in all its stages. On one of them the piece of linen was as yet pure white and the flowers which were to be painted were only lightly traced upon it. Another frame showed the designs partly covered with wax, so as to protect these parts from the action of the dye. On a third again the ground colour had been applied and the wax had been removed from such portions of the design as were to receive the next coat of paint. Neatly arranged around stood the small pots of colours, of indigo, of red paint, of brown paint, of yellow paint, and so forth.

All these things Dalima surveyed with the critical eye of an expert and she highly approved of the arrangements. She took up a saucer which held the wax, and having held it to the fire, she proceeded, by means of a little tube, to pour the melted substance on one of the drawings and so gave proof of her skill in that kind of work.

"You see, Nana!" she cried, triumphantly, "you see how useful I shall be to you! I shall also teach you how to use the 'aboe Kesambi' (ashes of the Scheichera trijaga), I don't see any about here—then you will see how vastly your flowers will improve in colour and softness."

Thus then had baboe Dalima found a home on the slope of the Goenoeng Poleng. Thus she was again united to the young mistress to whom she was attached with a fervour of devotion which is not uncommon among Javanese servants. Both girls toiled and moiled together. Anna insisted upon taking her full share in all the drudgery of the little housekeeping—and whatever objections the baboe might strive to make, Anna would share and share alike. In Dalima she had acquired not a servant; but a true and faithful companion and friend, and a comforter and supporter in the time of her bitter trial. How long was that peaceful life to last—?

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LIM HO'S WEDDING.

On a fine September morning, of the same year in which the other events of our story took place, Santjoemeh was once again in a state of commotion. And no wonder. For that day had been fixed upon for the marriage of Lim Ho. Of Lim Ho, the son of the opium farmer, the son of the millionaire Lim Yang Bing, with Ngow Ming Nio, the prettiest Chinese girl of Santjoemeh, the prettiest perhaps in all Dutch India. She was the only daughter of old Nnow Ming Than, a speculator who had dealt in every possible thing out of which money could be made, and who was honoured, esteemed and sought after for the sake of the millions he had scraped together. Money everywhere exercises a certain power of attraction; not otherwise was it at Santjoemeh, and the union of two such enormous capitals was certain, therefore, to awaken general interest. Moreover, a Chinese wedding of this kind was a very rare occurrence, and the reports of the magnificence which the house of Lim Yang Bing would display on the occasion, were so extravagant that they bordered on the miraculous, and opened to the imagination visions like those of the Arabian Nights.

All Santjoemeh—taking these words in the same sense as "*tout Paris*" on similar occasions—had been scheming and intriguing to obtain an invitation; and many a pleasant smile had been lavished on babah Ong Sing Kok, or on babah Than Soeï, the purveyors of Mesdames Zoetbrouw and Greenhoed, ladies who, in the ordinary way, did not waste their blandishments on Chinamen, because it was thought that these gentlemen had a pretty large acquaintance among the staff of servants on Lim Yang Bing's establishment, and that through them the much coveted card of invitation might be procured.

There were some who were wicked enough to whisper, that a certain nonna had promised one of Lim Ho's cousins to give him a kiss if he would procure her parents a ticket for admission. The wicked went on to say, that this Chinaman, a shrewd fellow—like most of his race—had refused to undertake the negotiation, unless he received payment on account; an instalment which was not to count on the day of final settlement. That these negotiations had been very much protracted owing to the many difficulties which would constantly arise; that, on every such check in the proceedings, progress had to be reported to the young lady, and that our artful young Celestial had made every fresh effort on his part depend upon the payment of another instalment on hers. If all this were true, then the poor nonna must have paid pretty dearly for her ticket—in kisses. That, however, is the story of the wicked, it is not ours. On that September morning then, Santjoemeh was in a fever of excitement and expectation. If here and there perhaps Lim Ho's ugly adventure with baboe Dalima had not been forgotten, the remembrance of that outrage did not damp the general enthusiasm, or keep any one at home. Those who were troubled with a somewhat tender conscience, laid the flattering unction to their soul that, as there had been no prosecution, probably the whole story was false, or that, at the worst, no great harm had been done. Others there were who fully believed the truth of the reports which had been spread abroad; and who actually envied Lim Ho his "*bonne fortune.*" That Dalima was such a pretty girl! Oh, no! there was no one who would deny himself the expected pleasure on that account. It was very much the other way.

The evening before the eventful day, Santjoemeh had had something like a foretaste of the coming joy. For, on that evening, a procession had started to the Chinese temple. Now, marriage has, in the celestial empire, no necessary connection whatever with any religious observances; yet, on the present occasion, it had been thought well to propitiate the goddess Má Tsów Pô, the guardian and protecting deity of candidates for matrimony and of newly married people. Accordingly, on the eve of the wedding, a procession had been formed in front of the bride's house. First came a numerous band of native musicians who, on their brass instruments accompanied by a drum of monstrous size, performed a selection of waltzes, polkas, mazurkas and redowas. In spite of the horrible dissonance of their execution, these lively tunes would have set even Johann Strauss a jigging could he but have heard them. Then followed a corps of Chinese artists whose grating one-stringed fiddles, clashing cymbals and discordant screeching wind-instruments, alternated with the former band; and produced a mixed medley of hideous sounds, which literally set one's teeth on edge, and put all but the most inveterate sight-seers to instant flight. At the head of the procession and in its rear, marched six torch-bearers, while eight paper lanterns were born aloft on red poles on either side. These shed a soft coloured light and, by their fantastic shapes, imparted a thoroughly Chinese air to the scene. But the nucleus, and most important part of the pageant, consisted of twelve boys who walked two and two, and were called 'lo jen see' (barefeet). They were dressed in short nankin gowns reaching only to the knee, under which appeared the bare legs and feet, and on their heads they wore tall conical caps, trimmed with red fringe. Each of these youths held in his hand the pa-lee, or hollow metal ring containing little bits of iron, from which hung small copper bells. With these, the bearers made a gentle rattling sound as they marched along.

When the temple was reached, the boys grouped themselves around the image of Má Tsów Pô, a deity represented as standing on the clouds and wearing a crown in token of her dignity of Queen of Heaven. Then, to a kind of measure, they began to mumble and chaunt their prayers and incantations, shaking their ring the while incessantly. This went on for about

the space of an hour, and then the procession reformed and marched homeward with a far greater crowd at its heels than had accompanied its setting out.

The next day, however, was the great day.

Very early in the morning carriages began to rattle through the streets of Santjoemeh, to fetch the landowners, officials, and other distinguished guests, who lived in the country round about. On the stroke of ten the *élite* of the Residence had assembled in the vast inner-gallery of Lim Yang Bing's mansion. The gentlemen were all in full-dress, in uniform, or in black evening dress; the ladies wore ball toilettes; and at the entrance a number of Chinese boys were stationed to hand to each of their fair guests a bouquet of lovely pink roses. As one by one the principal guests drove up, crackers were let off, varying in number according to the social position of the individual who presented himself. If two or more happened to enter together, bunches of crackers were exploded in exact proportion to the number of visitors; and sometimes these fireworks exploded with a din that was almost deafening.

At length Mr. van Gulpendam and his fair spouse made their appearance. They were received and escorted into the house by Chinese officers with the most punctilious ceremony. At his entrance, two copper serpents were exploded, and there were flatterers among the company who declared to Laurentia and to Lim Yang Bing, that, compared to the din these terrible serpents made, an eruption of Krakatoea was but child's play.

The object of this infernal noise was two-fold. It was useful on the one hand to frighten away the evil spirits who might be lurking about the premises, and, on the other, it served as an expression of joy and as an evidence of cordial welcome to the visitors.

As soon as the Resident had arrived, a long line of the intimate friends and acquaintances of the bridegroom, accompanied by the inevitable band and by the barefeet who had officiated on the previous evening, started off to fetch the bride from the house of her parents. Meanwhile, the major and the captain of the Chinese did the honours of the feast, while the lieutenants of that nation acted as masters of the ceremonies. Nothing could be more courteous than the manner in which these gentlemen acquitted themselves of their onerous duties. They attended to every want, they offered refreshments; and soon the popping of champagne corks indoors began to mingle with the incessant banging of the fireworks without; and generous wine, iced in huge silver bowls, was foaming and sparkling in the crystal glasses. For the ladies, there was an ample supply of hippocras, Golden water, Chartreuse and other liqueurs.

Lim Yang Bing had offered his arm to fair Laurentia, and the pair walked leisurely up and down that stately saloon, which, under ordinary circumstances, might be called magnificent, but had now been specially decorated with the utmost skill and taste. The woodwork, the pillars, the beams and architraves of the apartment were all curiously carved and heavily gilt, and represented either hideous dragon-forms, or else scenes of domestic life in China. The walls were tinted a delicate rose-colour, and the floor, of pure Carrara marble, was covered with matting woven of the finest split rottan. At the end of this splendid saloon stood the altar of Tao Peng Kong gorgeously decorated, while wide strips of red silk, bearing black Chinese letters, hung on either side of the sanctuary.

"Tell me, babah," asked the Resident's wife, "what may be the meaning of that scribble on those red rags?"

"They are proverbs, njonja, taken from Kong Foe Hi," gallantly replied the Chinaman.

"Yes, but what do they mean?"

"That one, njonja, signifies: 'May the five blessings abide in this house.'"

"And the others?"

"They are the names of the five blessings."

"Ah indeed!" continued Laurentia, "and what are those blessings?"

"A long life, peace and rest, love of virtue, wealth and a happy end as the crown of life."

"And what do the letters on those lanterns signify? I say, babah, they are very fine!" said Laurentia pointing upward at the lanterns, depending from the ceiling and from the beams.

They were handsome hexagonal contrivances skilfully made, in the Chinese style, of wrought copper, and having large plates of pure polished crystal let into the sides.

"Yes, yes, njonja," assented the babah with a complacent smile, "as you say they are very beautiful objects; but they cost a good deal of money. Now could you give a guess at the price of one of those copper lanterns?"

"Not I, babah! how could I? let me see—they may be worth some fifty guilders."

"Fifty guilders!" exclaimed the Chinaman with something like pity for her ignorance. "Oh, njonja, how could you have made such a bad shot. Why! I thought you prized the masterpieces of our Chinese art somewhat more highly than that!"

"Well!" said the crafty woman, "and what, pray, may be the value of the things?"

"Every lantern, njonja, you see hanging there, has cost me in Canton, three hundred and fifty guilders, without reckoning carriage and duty."

"Oh, never mind that!" laughed Laurentia, "I daresay you managed to smuggle them across."

"No, njonja, by Kong, no! I can show you the receipt from the custom-house. Will the njonja—"

"No, babah, don't trouble yourself, I take your word for it. But what may they have cost you altogether?"

"Close upon four hundred guilders a piece, njonja."

"There are about thirty of them I should think," said Laurentia.

"Only five and twenty, njonja."

"Only! Only five and twenty!" said Mrs. van Gulpendam smiling. "It is pretty well, I should say—ten thousand guilders worth of lanterns!"

Lim Yang Bing's face glowed with satisfaction. Like most parvenus he took an intense delight in letting every one know what he had paid for the precious objects he exhibited.

"And look, njonja," he continued, "pray look at those tigers."

With these words the opium-farmer pointed to a pair of red marble tigers. The figures were life-size and were represented crouching on two black marble pedestals at the foot of the two pillars one on each side of the altar.

"Yes, babah, I admire them much—they are very fine indeed! They must have cost a pretty penny I should think?"

"Each one of those figures represents five thousand guilders, njonja."

"But babah!" cried Laurentia.

"You see, njonja," said the babah sententiously, "when one gives a wedding party of this kind, one ought to do it well. Have you noticed that cock over the altar yonder?"

"I see it, babah, I see it, how exquisitely it is carved."

"It is cut out of a single block of peachwood," said the Chinaman, "that little thing alone has cost me twelve hundred guilders."

"I say, babah! you must be a rich man," remarked Laurentia.

"So, so," replied the Chinaman inordinately proud in his assumed modesty. "Do you happen to know what the wedding breakfast and this evening's banquet will cost me?"

"No, I don't—do tell me, babah!"

"Well, I will—they will stand me in very nearly fifteen thousand guilders."

"Why, babah! you must be a very rich man" said Laurentia in a wheedling voice.

"Oh, not very," whined the Chinaman. "But you don't know how much I give my son as my wedding gift."

"You mean to Lim Ho, the bridegroom? No, I cannot guess—do tell me, babah?"

"Two millions!" he whispered, fairly beside himself with delight.

"Two million guilders!" exclaimed Laurentia, feigning the utmost surprise. "Why, babah, you must have a mint of money!"

"No, njonja, not overmuch!'

"And all of it out of your opium contract, eh?"

The Chinaman looked at his fair companion, he gave her a very strange look; that word opium had completely sobered him.

"And you have only had the contract for three years, I think, babah?" continued Laurentia.

Lim Yang Bing nodded assent. In his heart he was beginning to curse his boasting and vapouring.

"Have you seen the Resident lately?" asked Laurentia carelessly, but determined to strike while the iron was hot.

"No, njonja," replied the Chinaman politely, but with none of his former gush.

"I know he wishes to speak to you about the contract—it runs out I think with the current year?"

"Yes, njonja."

"And I think the monopoly for the next three years will be granted some time this month?"

"Yes, njonja."

"Do you intend to bid for it, babah?"

"I think so, njonja."

"Yes, njonja! no, njonja! I think so, njonja!" cried Laurentia mimicking the poor Chinaman most comically, "But, hush, someone is listening—What do you say is the meaning of those words on the lanterns, babah?"

The last question she asked in her ordinary tone of voice, with that light-hearted giggle which was peculiar to the handsome woman.

"Those letters mean: 'We pray for happiness and prosperity.'"

"Thank you, and on that one yonder?"

"The word on that one signifies: 'Lantern of Heaven?'"

Thus talking they had walked away out of ear-shot.

"Now," resumed Laurentia in a subdued voice, now we can go on with our conversation:

"You seem to be very lukewarm about that monopoly business, babah. I fear you will have a competitor at the auction."

"Who is he?" asked Lim Yang Bing somewhat eagerly.

"I have heard the name of Kwee Sioen Liem mentioned, the Solo man; you know!"

"Indeed," muttered the Chinaman evidently much put out.

"Yes, they say he is a rich man, he may do you some damage perhaps, babah," continued Mrs. van Gulpendam fixing her glittering eyes upon her companion.

To this Lim Yang Bing made no reply, but he kept on with measured step walking by the side of the Resident's wife.

"That bit of information does not seem to affect you very much?" continued Laurentia with a slight sneer.

"Is that why the Resident wants to see me?" asked the Chinaman.

"Yes, I think so, partly at least for that; and I believe he has some other business to transact with you. The Government, you know, expects the bids to go much higher this year."

"Oh ho!" grinned the Chinaman.

"You now pay twelve hundred thousand guilders for your monopoly, do you not? You will have to make it twenty, or else the Government will keep the whole business in its own hands."

"Let them!" said Lim Yang Bing smiling disdainfully, "I should very much like to see that." But, after a moment's reflection, he went on: "It is quite impossible to offer more; as it is, we can only just avoid a loss."

"And yet you can manage to give two millions to your son as a wedding present," remarked Laurentia, with a knowing laugh.

"Aye," he continued, as if he had not heard the remark, "if the Government would grant more licenses in the Residence, in that case."—

"Is that all?" cried Laurentia carelessly. "How many do you hold now? But; that is no business of mine. How many more do you want?"

"Ten at the very least," was the ready answer.

"That's a good many, babah!—if ten additional licenses were granted, then I understand you to say that you are prepared to go up to two millions?"

Lim Yang Bing could only nod assent; he had no time to express himself verbally, for at that moment the procession, which had gone to fetch the bride had returned, and was appearing at the entrance of the gallery.

Its arrival was greeted with an explosion of fireworks so tremendous, and a cacophony from the Chinese band so hideous, that the din was absolutely deafening. If any evil spirits had been lurking about, that atrocious noise must certainly have made them take to their heels. No, not even the Shan Sao could stand that. In the midst of all this uproar, a comely group of Chinese maidens, very demure damsels, with finely cut features and modestly attired in picturesque gowns of yellow silk, with rose coloured sashes round their slim little waists, came forward to meet the bride and to bid her welcome. They offered her a garland of peach blossom, the emblem of maiden purity, and some nick-nacks amongst which was a cock, the emblem of the sungod, curiously carved out of peach-wood.

Lim Ho also advanced to offer his hand to Ngow Ming Nio, and to lead her to a table well furnished with the customary viands. On that board appeared an endless array of dishes, the usual Chinese dishes, such as sharks' fins, soup made of stags' tendons and birds' nests, "kiemlo" and "bahmieh" (two fat soups) and other delicacies of no particular significance. But besides these the table contained other articles of food to which a distinctly emblematical meaning was attached. There was the pomegranate sliced in such a manner as to display to the greatest advantage its innumerable seedgrains, signifying the numerous offspring with which might the marriage be richly blessed! There were large heaps of the orange, fit emblem of the sweetness of life, which might the happy pair long enjoy! There were clusters of the oyster, typifying the distinct personality of each member and the unbroken unity of the entire family; and lastly some cuttings of the sugar cane, signifying the blessedness of the married state which, as that cane from knot to knot, from joint to joint, still increases in sweetness and in love.

The betrothed couple now took their place at the table, Lim Ho at his bride's left hand, the place of honour in China. Before them were set two mighty goblets of pure gold. Both the beakers were filled with wine to the brim, and were connected with one another by a thread of scarlet silk. Then the bride and bridegroom simultaneously drained half the contents of the cups, after which they exchanged goblets, taking care however, that the scarlet thread remained unbroken. This time the cups were drained.

"Ouff!" cried van Beneden, who was present with his friends, "it is enough to take one's breath away! Each of those things must hold at least a bottle and a half of wine I bet! For Lim Ho it is nothing; but for that poor little thing!"

"Aye, and I bet, you wouldn't mind hob-nobbing with pretty Ngow Ming Nio," replied Grenits.

"Do hold your tongue!" said Grashuis as he glanced at a group of Chinamen who stood near, and who looked anything but pleased at the unseemly burst of merriment which at so solemn a moment, had greeted Grenits' words.

"Hush! Hush!" was the cry on all sides.

Resident van Gulpendam glared round indignantly, and Laurentia looked black as thunder at the interruption in the midst of the drinking ceremony.

Van Rheijn would have crept underground to avoid those terrible eyes.

When the couple had thus copiously pledged one another, the bridegroom took the left hand of the bride. He raised it to the level of her breast, and in that attitude, the pair gravely saluted one another.

"I say," whispered Grenits, "I wish that dear little pet would give me such a bow."

"I daresay," remarked August van Beneden; "a dear little pet with two millions of money."

"Hush, hush!" was again the cry.

"Pooh!" cried Grenits, "millions squeezed out of the opium trade!"

The young lawyer hung his head in confusion.

"You are right," said he. "No! from such a source I would not take a single farthing!"

"Hush, hush!"

Van Gulpendam's eyes flashed with indignation. The next rite was a very curious one indeed. Two dishes were placed before the betrothed. They contained a mixture of red and white pellets, the size of an ordinary pea.

Grenits turned to one of the Chinamen who stood close beside him in the crowd, and asked what might be the meaning of this ceremony.

"Are they medicine?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied the Chinaman. "The red balls represent the Jang or male, the white represent the Jin or female principle in nature."

"Hush, hush!" resounded again on all sides. Lim Ho and the bride now, each in a golden spoon, took up a red and a white ball, swallowed them and once again bowed deeply to one another. Then the dishes were interchanged, just as the cups had been before, the ceremony was repeated and with that act, the marriage was complete. They were now man and wife inseparably joined together.

Ngow Ming Nio and Lim Ho, the one set of millions was joined to the other.

During all these festive rites, did Lim Ho bestow even one passing thought upon his victim, baboe Dalima? We doubt it.

The nuptial ceremonies having been thus performed, the young wife took up in the spoon two of the little balls and gracefully presented them to the lips of her husband, and, with a winning smile, invited him to eat. By this rite the newly married woman bound herself to bear all the cares and anxieties of the domestic arrangements in the future household. While this ceremony was going on, one of the oldest members of the family audibly recited a few words in the Chinese tongue.

"What is he saying?" asked Grenits, turning to his friendly neighbour.

"O toean," replied the latter, "it is a quotation from the Sji-king, the book of songs which was printed long, very long ago." (It is said to have been printed in the eleventh century B.C.)

"But what is the meaning of the quotation?"

"It has a very pretty meaning—something like this: 'The peach tree is young and fair, its blossoms are pure and bright—this young woman is going to her future home and will be an excellent manager of her domestic affairs.'"

"Very pretty indeed!" laughed Grenits.

When the young wife had thus, typically, served her husband with food, both made another low obeisance, and this concluded the ceremony.

The last bow was the signal for another terrific outburst of noise. The small cannon thundered, salvos of innumerable mertjons were fired off, the band of the Santjoemeh militia, which had appeared but lately on the scene, played up with all its might, the Chinese orchestra shrieked forth most dismal wails, and that roaring, that crackling, that drumming, that tooting, that sawing and scraping produced a din so indescribably stunning and so hideous that an ear-drum of bull's hide could hardly have endured the noise.

In the midst of this tumult the newly married couple took up their position in front of the altar of Tao' Peh Kong. First, they each kindled a little stick of sandal wood and fragrant incense which, while burning, they stuck into a massive golden bowl half filled with scented ashes. Thus having paid their homage to the household god, they turned to receive the congratulations of the company. This was not a national custom at all, for in China, when no white men are present, the wedded pair at once retire to their apartment. It was, in fact, a concession made to Western usage, and the Chinamen who were present scrupulously avoided taking any part in it. The majority of them left, to show their zeal, no doubt, by letting off some more fireworks and completing the rout of the evil spirits.

Resident van Gulpendam, taking his wife's arm, at once headed the procession of Europeans all eager to fall down before those millions thus auspiciously coupled together. But for these millions, however lovely might have been the bride, and though in the little world around him Lim Ho might have been voted a very good sort of fellow, not a single soul would have so much as dreamed of taking part in this chorus of hollow compliment. The scandal about Dalima was of much too recent date. But now that the two millions on the one side had joined the two millions on the other—now that Lim Ho, the son of Lim Yang Bing, the all-powerful opium farmer, was the happy man, now the entire European population was ready to crowd around that highly-favoured couple and press upon them their heartfelt and sincere congratulations.

Not content with this, Mr. van Gulpendam considered it his duty, after having shaken hands, to add a few words of affectionate advice. Very fortunate indeed it was that neither husband nor wife understood the Dutch language and thus were spared the infliction of the nautical terms with which the worthy resident so richly interlarded his discourse, but which he found utterly untranslatable into Malay. It was a good thing also for the patience of the bystanders, that Laurentia stood by the side of her dear spouse and exhorted him to be brief by digging the point of her elbow pretty sharply into his side. At length the twaddle of the chief functionary came to an end, and now ensued a scene of handshaking, of cringing and fawning, and of general cant on both sides, which would have filled any honest heart with the deepest disgust. But neither Lim Yang Bing nor Lim Ho failed to notice that neither Theodoor Grenits, nor August van Beneden, nor Leendert Grashuis, nor Edward van Rheijn had joined this troop of sycophants. They had taken advantage of the crowd and confusion to leave the house. Charles van Nerekool had flatly refused to go at all. He could not overcome the aversion with which Lim Ho had inspired him; but when he heard a report of the proceedings, he resolved that, should another such opportunity occur, though the festivities might be held on a much smaller scale, he would try and witness so extraordinary a spectacle.

It was well perhaps for our young friends that they left when they did; for presently the scene became rather uproarious. No sooner were the greetings exchanged and the congratulations ended, than the champagne corks began to pop with an energy and frequency which seemed to rival the bangs of the mertjons outside. Presently the whole company, Chinamen and Europeans, stood up, holding aloft their glasses full of sparkling wine, and deafening cheers were raised, while the Chinese "trauwkoeis" and the clattering cymbals screeched and clashed, and the militia trumpets brayed, and the serpents and mertjons banged with a noise as if a town was being bombarded. In the midst of this unearthly din the bridal pair disappeared; anxious, probably, to save their ear-drums.

In the evening, the formal banquet took place, to which eighty guests had been invited. The *menu* of the feast had been carefully prepared by a French *maître d'hôtel*, and was excellent; although next day the wags of Santjoemeh would have it that dishes decidedly peculiar to the Celestial empire had graced the board, such as "*Potage Kiemlo à la Tartare*," "*Potage printanier à l'ail*," "*Croquettes aux oreilles de rats*," "*Bouchées d'ailerons de requins*," "*Consommées de tripang*," &c. &c.

After dinner, President van Gulpendam rose to propose the toast of the evening; and to drink the health of the newly married couple. He did so, if the reports are to be believed, in a speech of extraordinary brilliancy. It fell to his lot also, afterwards, to propose the health of the Chinese officers, and, in doing so, he expressed a hope that the Netherlands might always find in her Chinese subjects as faithful and useful members of the community as they had hitherto proved themselves to be. He laid very marked stress upon the word "useful," and the close of his speech was greeted with thundering applause.

Lim Yang Bing replied to this toast, and at the conclusion of his remarks he proposed the health of Mr. and Mrs. van Gulpendam. He heartily congratulated Santjoemeh on the possession of such excellent rulers, and for the good of its inhabitants in general, and of the Chinese community in particular, he expressed the hope that they might long see that noble pair at the head of the Residence.

It was well that the roof of the mansion was a pretty strong one and that the foundations of its walls and pillars were firm and deep, or else some deplorable calamity must have occurred; for the deafening cheers of the company burst forth with the force of a hurricane; the soil literally shook under the feet of the assembled guests at the salvoes of mertjons and of small ordnance without, while the air within was alive with the popping of corks, which flew from the necks of the bottles with the regularity of well sustained file-fire. So unbounded was the enthusiasm with which the eloquent words of the worthy opium farmer were received. After the banquet came the ball, which was attended by almost the whole of Santjoemeh. Towards midnight, there was a display of Chinese fireworks in the grounds, and our pig-tailed brethren, on that occasion, proved how immeasurably superior is their skill in pyrotechny compared to anything European artists can aspire to in that line. Then dancing was resumed with fresh vigour, and the last couples did not leave the ball-room until the break of day.

"That was a glorious, a most sumptuous feast, babah," said Resident van Gulpendam a few days later to his friend Lim Yang Bing. "My eyes! didn't you make the galley smoke!"

"Yes, kandjeng toean," replied the opium farmer, with a smile of intensely gratified vanity. "Yes; but it has cost me a pretty little sum of money, why, in champagne alone, I have spent more than two thousand guilders, and quite another twelve hundred in Rhenish wine. The fireworks I had direct from Canton, and they have cost me three thousand at the very least."

As he dwelt upon these details, the man was in the seventh heaven of delight.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DISGRACEFUL OPPOSITION. TWO OPIUM COMPANIES BY THE EARS.

NEARLY the whole of Santjoemeh had been keeping festival. It was, indeed, no everyday occurrence for the son of the rich opium farmer of the district to marry the daughter of an equally wealthy disciple of Mercury. At the union of so many millions the Dutch public could not but evince the liveliest interest—and it had done so.

We said: nearly the whole of Santjoemeh; for there were some who had not thought it incumbent upon them to grace the banquet and the ball with their presence. Van Beneden, Grashuis, van Rheijn, and Grenits, had allowed their ethnological curiosity to prevail so far as to induce them to go and witness the nuptial ceremony; but nothing could persuade them to attend the subsequent festivities. They had, on the contrary, determined, while the European population was crowding within Lim Yang Bing's stately mansion in the Gang Pinggir, and the natives were swarming all around it, to pass a particularly quiet evening together at the house of their friend van Nerekool.

When they entered they found the young judge still seated at his study bending over his work by the light of a reading-lamp.

"Hallo!" cried one, "still at it?"

"Are the courts so very busy just now?" asked another.

"By Jove!" exclaimed a third, "that's what I call zeal for the service!"

"Ornithologically speaking," laughed van Beneden, "our friend Charles should be classed with the *rara avis*. Come, come, old fellow, this is no time for working! All Santjoemeh is astir—just hear what an infernal row is going on yonder."

"Yes," remarked Theodoor Grenits, with a scornful laugh, "they are making noise enough over it."

"My dear friends," replied van Nerekool, "the greater part of the day I have been very busy indeed; for as Leendert just now observed with more truth than he himself was aware, at the present moment we have a great deal of work to get through in the courts; but yet, when you came in, I was occupied in a very different manner."

"Would it be indiscreet to ask what made our host bend his head so anxiously over his desk?" asked Theodoor.

"Not at all, I was reading a letter I have just received from William; that is what made me lay aside my pen."

"From William Verstork?"

"How is he?"

"Is he well?"

"How is he getting on at Atjeh?"

These questions crossed one another, and were uttered, as it were, in a breath; for the five young men were warmly attached to the worthy controller.

"Yes," replied van Nerekool, "I am glad to tell you that Verstork is in perfect health, and that he is getting on uncommonly well in the military world yonder."

"Well, that's a blessing," remarked van Rheijn, who never liked soldiers, "I am glad to hear it—I don't at all want to change places with him."

"And what is his letter about, Charles?" asked van Beneden.

"His letter is a very long one," replied van Nerekool, "much too long to read to you this evening. The greater part of it, moreover, is devoted to purely private matters; and contains particulars concerning the parents of Anna van Gulpendam, which I do not think I have a right to communicate to you. He tries to cure me of my love for her, and I have no doubt that his endeavour is exceedingly well meant; but yet the contents of his letter have made me very melancholy, as they make the chasm between us appear deeper and more impassible than it seemed before.

"Where can she be?" he continued after an instant's pause—"If I only knew that then all would not be lost!"

The four friends looked at one another sadly—that letter had evidently touched a string which vibrated painfully in van Nerekool's heart.

"Come, Charles," said Grashuis, trying to rouse his friend, "you must not give way to that melancholy mood. You must try and accept the inevitable. Moreover, who can tell what the future may bring!"

"But she is gone!" cried Van Nerekool hopelessly, "she has disappeared without leaving a trace."

A strange smile passed over Edward van Rheijn's lips; but he made no direct remark.

At length he said: "Baboe Dalima also seems to have mysteriously disappeared."

Van Nerekool made an impatient gesture as one who would say: 'What is that to me?'

"I happened lately to be at Kaligaweh," continued van Rheijn, "and I chanced to meet old Setrosmito there. He tells me that Dalima started off some time ago for Karang Anjer."

"For Karang Anjer!" exclaimed van Nerekool, "and what—?"

"But from that time to this her family have had no tidings from her," continued van Rheijn.

"Have they heard nothing?" asked Charles.

"Not a single word—indeed her parents do not know whether she is alive or dead."

Van Nerekool's head sunk down despondingly on his breast. "One faint gleam of hope," he murmured, "and then dark night again!"

For a while no one spoke. At length van Beneden, who wished to lead his friend's thoughts into a different channel, broke the silence:

"Does Verstork write upon no other subject than this?"

"Oh, yes," replied Charles, who was gradually regaining his composure. "Let us go into the inner room and I will read you the most interesting portion of his letter. This is not at all the place for a comfortable chat."

Thereupon they left the study, which, with its folios and bulky law-books, did not indeed present a very sociable or cosy appearance.

"Sabieio, chairs and cigars for the gentlemen!" cried van Nerekool. When all were seated and the fragrant Manillas were lighted, he continued:

"Gentlemen, what do you say to a glass of beer?"

No very determined opposition being offered to this hospitable proposal, van Nerekool again called to his servant, "Sabieio, bring us some iced beer."

Thus all having quenched their thirst in the pleasant and cooling beverage:

"Now then gentlemen," said Charles, "I will give you the most important parts of William's letter," and he began to read as follows:

"'Do you recollect that when we sat down to dinner together after our day's hunting in the Djoerang Pringapoes, I told you of a certain recipe for pills to counteract opium, and how that I also told you what success I had already had with this medicine? Grenits, at the time, was not at all inclined to look

favourably upon that communication, and took a very gloomy view of the prospect which lay before me. The words he used on that occasion have been continually ringing in my ears; and to this day I remember them as clearly as when they were spoken, he said: "Keep that prescription strictly to yourself, and don't say a word about it to anybody. The Colonial Secretary, who has but one object in view, and that is to raise the opium revenue as much as possible, might look upon your remedy as an attack made upon the golden calf; and missionaries have before this been impeded in their Gospel work, and men have been expelled from the colonies, and official functionaries have been suspended or pensioned off for the commission of much more venial offences than bringing such pills as yours to the opium smokers." Now, Charles, you know that although with an eye to the future of the members of my family, who, to some extent, depend upon me for support, I was, for a few moments, depressed at my friend's gloomy prognostic; yet I soon rallied, and, after a little reflection, began to look upon Grenits' words as the outcome of a passing fit of melancholy induced by our conversation, which had almost exclusively run on opium horrors and opium scandals. Indeed, Grenits himself could not have intended to paint the future in colours as dark as his words seemed to imply; for you remember that when I laughed and said: "Oh, it is not quite so bad as that, I hope," he replied with a smile, "Perhaps not; but your pills will not earn you the Netherlands' Lion."

"'Ah, no, Charles! I never aimed at any such distinction. The little good I have been able to do I have done simply for its own sake and without the least expectation of any recompense. Such ambition I have always most willingly left to others; for I know full well that seldom real merit, sometimes the directly opposite, but always a certain amount of pliability and want of back-bone, is rewarded by these outward tokens of official approbation. And the mere thought that I might so much as be suspected of belonging to those invertebrates would suffice to paralyse every effort on my part. The shaft which Theodoor thus shot at random missed its mark; yet neither he nor I could, at that time, suspect how much sarcasm lay hidden in his last words or how very much to the point had been his foregoing counsels. Now pay good heed to what I am about to tell you.

"'I had not been here very long, before I received a document from the Chief Secretary's office at Batavia. That, in itself, was no very uncommon occurrence. I have frequently had communications from that quarter when information was required on certain civil questions, such as duties and other things of that kind, about which they did not wish to trouble the Military Governor. But yet, it seemed rather strange to me that, on this occasion, I did not receive the document through the Chief of the Military Department. It was a written paper, yet not a despatch. It looked more like a circular although these are generally either printed or lithographed. Now listen to what it contained: "An attempt has been discovered at Batavia to import certain pills consisting of or mixed with opium, under the pretence that they are medicinal. The Indian Government has come to the conclusion that the pills in question must be considered as a preparation of opium, and it, therefore, forbids the importation of this so-called medicine except through its own agents, and the sale thereof excepting by the regularly licensed opium farmers and such apothecaries and chemists as are specially exempt from the provisions of the Opium Act. You are hereby requested strictly to enforce the Government's decision on this subject."

"'This precious document bore the Home Secretary's signature.

"'Here at Oleh-leh I had made attempts with the pills in question to cure the Chinese opium smokers of their fatal passion, and my efforts in their behalf had met with marked success. I had further given a couple of hundred of them to the officers of the garrison for distribution among such of their men as might need them. These gentlemen also gave me the most glowing account of the success of the medicine. The trophy of bedoedans in my study was enriched by half-a-dozen pipes; and I must confess, Charles, that as often as my eye happened to fall on those instruments of moral ruin, which are hanging there harmless on my wall as the visible tokens of victories obtained, I could not repress a feeling of self-satisfaction. Was I now to desist? Was I forbidden any longer to attempt the rescue of the infatuated wretches around me? I could not realise it—I could not believe it. Surely the Government would not refuse to hold out a helping hand to the myriads of wretched victims of opium which swarm all about India! There must be a mistake somewhere. The Government must have been misinformed and all that was needed was for somebody to open its eyes to the truth.

"'To put these pills into the hands of the opium farmer for distribution would be reducing the whole thing to the most utter absurdity and to ensure failure beforehand.

"'I therefore sat down and drew up a carefully detailed statement in which I gave the result of my own experience, the evidence of the missionaries and the favourable opinions also of the officers mentioned above. I added to my document legally attested declarations of these gentlemen as to the salutary effects of the medicine.

"'Finally, I ventured to suggest, that, in favour of these pills as a *bona fide* medicine, an exception might be made, and that, as prepared and sent out by the Missionary Society, they might be excluded from the regulations of the opium law.

"'My dear Charles, what was I about? Oh, yes, as an honest man I had followed the dictates of my conscience; but it was too simple-minded on my part to hope that the Government might, in the highest interests of morality, be induced to forego even the smallest scrap of its profits. I was a greenhorn indeed to sit down and pen such a document at a time when money—money—money—is the only question with the Government and money-scraping seems to be our highest national virtue; while men resolutely close their eyes to the dirty gutters out of which it is raked together.

"'Very soon after, indeed by the very next mail, I received a reply to my proposal. It ran thus: "It is not the intention of the Government to discuss the proposal contained in your letter of the —th. The pills in question must have lately found their way into other parts of the island as well as into Batavia. Ostensibly they are designed to wean the smokers from the excessive use of opium; but in reality they only serve to procure that indulgence at a much cheaper rate for those who, either from want of means or for other reasons, cannot procure the drug from the legitimate source. While you were occupying the post of controller in the district of Santjoemeh we had good reason to suspect that, in your official capacity, you were not disinclined to evade—we are willing to believe from the best motives—the Government regulations with regard to the sale of opium; and that you thus contributed to diminish the public revenue. Your last letter incontestably proves that you are pursuing the same practices now. On a public servant who entertains such views of his duty, the Government cannot look with much favour; and were it not that I am fully persuaded that you are actuated by the very best motives in pursuing your present line of conduct, and that your well-known family relations make me very loth to adopt decided measures, I would at once propose your dismissal as a man unfit for the public service. I have directed the Governor carefully to watch your proceedings and to report immediately to head-quarters the first failure of duty on your part that may come under his notice. I need hardly tell you that the State requires from its servants a very different conception of duty from that of lending a willing ear to every foolish sentiment of morbid philanthropy; and that, therefore, if you give any further cause for dissatisfaction you must not reckon upon any consideration whatever." ' "

"It is disgraceful!" exclaimed Grenits as soon as van Nerekool ceased reading. "A noble-hearted fellow like William Verstork to be so shamefully treated!"

"Oh, that opium, that opium!" continued Grashuis no less indignantly than his friend, "it seems to taint the very life-blood of our nation. Has it then come to this that we are to be deprived of every means of stemming the national evil?"

"Yes, it is indeed disgraceful!" chimed in van Beneden.

"But, my friends," objected van Rheijn, "are you not rather one-sided in your view of the matter and rather too hasty in forming an opinion? May there not be some truth in what the Government alleges and might not these pills, under the pretence of being a cure, only be another means for extending the illicit traffic in opium?"

"Oh, Edward!" exclaimed van Nerekool, "how can you bring yourself to suspect William Verstork of illicit traffic?"

"And the Netherland's Missionary Society?" added Grashuis.

"Pardon me, my friends," cried van Rheijn as he passionately jumped up from his chair. "You misunderstand me entirely, I never meant to suggest anything of the kind. I am just as much convinced as any of you can be that both William Verstork and our missionaries are acting in this matter with the most perfect good faith and honour. I was not for an instant thinking of them when I spoke. But might not men without principle and without honour, under cover of these wholesome pills, introduce others made of pure opium and thus defraud the revenue?"

"Well," said Grenits doubtfully, "such a thing might perhaps come to pass."

"And is it not then right and proper," continued van Rheijn, "that the Government should guard against possible fraud? Under cover of these pills the opium plague might conceivably attain to altogether extravagant dimensions."

"Without the treasury being one penny the better for it," hastily interposed Grashuis. "So long as the revenue is kept up they are not so over squeamish in Government circles about the abuse of opium. Quite the contrary."

"And then Verstork's proposal to admit only the pills sent out by the Missionary Society was fair enough," added Grenits. "It would not be very difficult to protect and encourage the use of the medicine and at the same time guard against adulteration or fraud. But no," he continued, "that is evidently not what the Government wants. Not one poor scruple must be taken from the dose of poison which is, in a measure, forced upon the people, and every effort to mitigate the evil must, in spite of the twaddle and cant at the Hague, be sternly repressed. My friends, you all recollect our discussions on that subject. In the face of what we have heard and seen can anyone deny or doubt that opium lies as a curse upon our poor Indian possessions?"

For a few moments the young men sat silently gazing on the floor before them. Alas no! that plain fact could not be denied—all were equally convinced of its truth.

"Yes, that opium!" sighed van Beneden. "Friends, let us change our ground without, however, quitting our subject. It would be a pity to do so just now—just now that we five men are assembled here together in Santjoemeh to protest against opium, while, at the same moment, yonder, the trumpets are braying and the cannon is roaring in homage to the millions which that same opium has wrung from the people. At the present moment the pig-tailed children of the Celestial empire are gathered together in perfect harmony and concord around their Tao Peh Kong; but such is not always the case. Circumstances sometimes arise which kindle the bitterest animosities between these Chinese brethren. As I was looking through a pile of papers, not very long ago, I happened to come upon a pretty quarrel which greatly interested me and gave me a deep insight, from another point of view, into the vicious circle in which the question of opium farming revolves. We are now sitting here so cosily and quietly together that I should like to take advantage of this favourable opportunity to tell you the story. I must only beg of you that you will pay no heed either to the names, the places or the dates I may use. I have no right to incriminate the actors in my tale, some of whom are still living. On the other hand, my story would lack interest and vividness were I to speak of N or P and introduce places as X or Y. I shall therefore take the liberty of introducing fictitious names. I beg you will bear that in mind.

"In the year—let us put it at ten years ago—there existed in the capital of one of Java's Residences—supposing we say in Santjoemeh—a mighty opium company, to which we will give the name of Hok Bie. This company Hok Bie had cast a covetous eye upon the monopoly in a district adjoining to Santjoemeh, which we will call Bengawan. But this same district had also attracted the attention of a young Chinaman called Tio Siong Mo. This young man was very wealthy, although he had not as many millions at command as had the company Hok Bie.

"It would lead me too far afield," continued van Benden, "were I to describe to you all the intrigues and plots which were set on foot, all the bribery and corruption which took place on both sides, to get possession of the coveted prize. Suffice it to say that the antagonists exerted their utmost powers; for Bengawan was a prize indeed. From the opium farmers' point of view it was the fattest district in all Java—and so it is now, unless I am much mistaken, and at present counts the greatest number of opium dens—though I hardly need add, as a corollary, that it contains the most wretched and poverty-stricken population in the island.

"At first it seemed as if the company Hok Bie would carry all before it; for it managed to cast serious doubts upon the solvency and credit of its adversary's sureties, and if they could be discredited, Tio Siong Mo would be excluded from the contest altogether.

"Tio Siong Mo, however, held firm, he fought the bribers with their own weapons; and he found means, somehow or other, to re-establish the credit of his sureties. How? You will perhaps be able to give a shrewd guess at that."

"Oh, yes, yes, go on!" cried Grenits, "that is as clear as the sun at noonday."

"Well then, that dodge having failed, the company Hok Bie began to look round for other means of attack. First it endeavoured to bribe Tio Siong Mo's sureties and to induce them to declare themselves bankrupts; but that did not succeed. Next it made an offer to its competitor of half a million of guilders in cash if he would retire from the contest. Half a million! It was a liberal bid, there was no denying that. But no! Tio Siong Mo did not waver a single instant, he flatly refused the tempting offer; for the monopoly of Bengawan was worth a much larger sum of money than that.

"On the day of the sale five competitors came forward; but three of these very soon dropped out of the bidding, and the representative of the company Hok Bie and Tio Siong Mo were left to fight out the matter between them.

"I will not weary you by describing the contest, which was carried on at one time with what seemed the wildest recklessness and at another with the most cunning circumspection. There were some very exciting passages in the battle. At length Hok Bie bid eighty thousand guilders."

"Eighty thousand?" exclaimed van Rheijn. "Why, that is not a very large sum."

"A month, a month, my dear fellow!" said van Beneden, correcting him.

"Well, a month, so be it," resumed van Rheijn; "that comes to only nine hundred and sixty thousand guilders a year. Here in Santjoemeh—!"

"For those days it was an exorbitant price," continued van Beneden, "I know all about it, and I can assure you it was an extravagantly high price."

"Well, and what happened then?" asked van Nerekool.

"The representative of Hok Bie had called out eighty thousand, thinking by that bid to disconcert and crush his opponent, for he had made a tremendous leap from sixty to eighty."

"The deuce!" cried van Rheijn, "and then?"

"Tio Siong Mo lost not an instant; but with the utmost coolness he said: 'Another thousand.'

"He spoke these words in a tone of voice which seemed to convey that he simply intended to add a thousand to whatever bid the other party might make.

"Hok Bie's representative looked blue; that last bold jump of his had brought him to the end of his tether—he was not empowered to go further. The resident who presided encouraged the competitors to go on. But no one spoke.

"At length was heard the 'third time,' accompanied by the fall of the hammer, and Tio Siong Mo had secured the monopoly. It was a large sum to pay merely for the contract; but the young Chinaman laughed in his sleeve. He knew well enough that in the dessa Bengawan he could screw double that amount out of it. But, as you will see, he reckoned without his host. The company Hok Bie was furious at having thus been worsted, and resolved to have its revenge. At the very first meeting of the directors four hundred thousand guilders were voted, not only to ensure Tio Siong Mo's fall, but even to secure him a comfortable little nook in the State prison. Two of the oldest members of the board undertook the job."

"By Jove!" cried Grenits, who was thoroughly interested in the story. As a merchant, such a piece of business was quite in his line, and he pricked his ears as a young race-horse, impatient for the start, dilates his quivering nostrils. "By Jove, I am anxious to hear how they managed that."

"They managed it very simply, indeed," continued van Beneden, "though it cost them a mint of money. But when it is a question of gratifying his passions, or of pampering his vanity your Chinaman is by no means stingy."

"No," said Grenits, "nor yet when it comes to throwing out a sprat to catch a mackerel."

"Agreed," said van Beneden; "but now let me go on, or else we shall not get to the end of the story to-night."

"Just so," assented Edward van Rheijn. "Make what haste you can; for I have also my little opium tale to tell—and something else besides that."

"Very good! August, drive ahead!" said Grenits.

"There were at that time a couple of opium districts which were contiguous to Bengawan, and which lay along the Java sea. Upon these the company Hok Bie at once flung itself, the monopoly not having as yet been granted for them."

"Yes, of course," remarked van Rheijn, "having lost the rich district of Bengawan, a couple of rather more meagre ones would form an agreeable compensation."

"Upon these," continued van Beneden, not heeding his friend's interruption, "the company Hok Bie greedily flung itself, and for the opium privilege of those two districts, it paid the sum of 40,000 guilders a month; though it was clear as day that at such a price it must incur a heavy loss."

"What then could it have been about to offer the money?" asked van Nerekool.

"The company's object was to get a large strip of the Java sea under its control."

"Oho!" exclaimed Grenits and van Rheijn in a breath—A light was beginning to dawn upon them.

"Do you fellows now begin to understand?" asked August with a broad smile. "That's a good job.

"You must know that the Residence Bengawan is bounded on the north by these two districts. The consequences of this acquisition soon began to show themselves. The coast of the Java sea lay open to the company Hok Bie, and smugglers soon began to ply diligently between that coast and Singapore. The contraband very soon found its way through the two districts to the interior, so that presently Bengawan was literally flooded with smuggled opium. To such an extent was this contraband trade carried on, that the drug was readily sold for about one half-penny, a price at which the farmer could not possibly afford to sell it.

"Then Tio Siong Mo attempted to brazen it out. He began by punctually meeting his obligations, and every month paid the contract money into the treasury. He did this, poor fellow, in the hope that the European authorities would assist him and protect him against this illicit trade which was robbing the revenue as well as himself. And what were the effects of all his representations to the Government—'Schwamm darüber'—Even where he did obtain some kind of co-operation from some chief official, he got no support whatever from the subordinates. They all, to a single man, sided with the much more powerful company Hok Bie, which never left any service unrewarded.

"These punctual payments were all very well so long as Tio Siong Mo could find the money. But, however well lined his chest might be, it was with him—as it always must be where much is going out and little or nothing coming in—a mere question of time.

"In the latter half of the second year of the contract, Tio Siong Mo was declared a bankrupt. He could not possibly cover his expenses, and by that time had fallen in arrears and owed a colossal sum to the treasury, a debt of which little or nothing was ever recovered, because, at the critical moment, his sureties had absconded to Singapore. So cleverly did these worthies dispose of their property, that they left nothing but debts behind them.

"'The Dutch Government wields a sword without mercy,' said the financial secretary; and that same Government which, by taking proper measures in its own interest as well as in the interest of their farmer, might have put a stop to smuggling on anything like a large scale, but had neglected to do so—that same Government now clapped poor Tio Siong Mo into prison. There he lingered for several years, and quite lately he has been released, it being evident that nothing was to be got out of him. We sometimes say, with regard to horses, that they who earn the corn do not always get it; and this episode I think shows that they who are punished are not always the real culprits."

"But what ultimately became of the Bengawan contract after the farmer's bankruptcy?" asked van Rheijn, curiously.

"Of course," resumed van Beneden, "the district had to be put up again after Tio Siong Mo's failure. Who were the new farmers the papers do not tell me; but, from a whining lamentation uttered by the financial secretary, in which he exhorts the judges to the utmost rigour against the luckless bankrupt, it appears that the whole thing only produced forty-one thousand guilders. Thus the State, in addition to the large sum owing by Tio Siong Mo, lost a clear sum of forty thousand guilders a month."

"That's the style!" exclaimed Grenits, "I wish such a thing as that would happen regularly, year by year, in all the districts, then some means would speedily be found to put an end to the opium traffic altogether."

"And what became of the two coast districts, which the company Hok Bie had taken?" asked van Rheijn, very anxious to get to the bottom of the story.

"What could the company make of them? they could be worked only at a loss, and, as soon as the object it had in view was obtained, it made over the contract to some other company—no doubt at considerable loss. At least Hok Bie would have no more to do with them."

"And the moral of the story is?" asked Leendert Grashuis.

"Why, simply this," said Theodoor Grenits, "that from whatever point of view you look at the opium-farming system, you are sure to catch sight of something particularly loathsome and disgusting."

"And that such a rotten system should form one of the principal sources of the Netherlands' colonial revenue!"

"Yes," assented van Beneden. "In these latter days it has indeed been raised to that dignity by men in office, into whose hands the indifference of our Dutch nation has placed unlimited power."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FURTHER FACTS ABOUT OPIUM. BIRDS-NESTING AT KARANG BOLLONG.

THESE were most unpalatable facts for our friends to listen to. But, however painful they might be, and however offensive to the ear of a patriotic Dutchman, yet they were facts which could neither be ignored nor explained away. Very gravely and very sadly the five young men sat slowly rocking themselves in their chairs and watching the wreaths of blue smoke as they curled upwards from their manillas. Thus they passed some time in silent thought, when suddenly, in the distance were heard fresh volleys of musketry, redoubled banging of mertjons, and this noise accompanied by loud bursts of cheering repeated again and again, which, arising within the banqueting hall, was taken up by the thousands of natives who stood without waiting for the display of fireworks. That crescendo in the festive din was occasioned no doubt by Lim Yang Bing's eloquent speech in honour of Resident van Gulpendam. "Sabieio, fill the glasses!" cried van Nerekool to his servant, making an effort to shake off the gloomy thoughts which oppressed him, and which not even van Beneden's story had been able to dissipate.

For the next few minutes they all sat listening to the disturbance outside, and when at length the noise had died away, van Rheijn re-opened the conversation.

"You told us just now, my dear August, that Tio Siong Mo had found no co-operation or support among the inferior class of officials; but that these, on the contrary, sided with the more powerful company Hok Bie. Now I take it for granted that you did not talk merely at random; but that you had some sufficient grounds for saying what you did. One thing, however, is not quite clear to me, and that is whether you meant that accusation to apply to the native opium-officials or to the Europeans. You will grant me, I suppose, that the accusation is a rather serious one."

Van Beneden did not raise his eyes, he drew a deep breath. At length after an interval of a few seconds, he said:

"Yes, you are perfectly right, the charge is undoubtedly a serious one. As a lawyer I am perfectly aware of that; and you were quite right also in presuming that I did not utter it without due consideration. The question you now ask me is this: 'To whom do you intend this grave censure to apply?' I might answer with perfect truth, that I apply it to native and European officials alike. But to be absolutely candid I ought to go further and confess that, when I spoke, I was aiming specially at the European officers."

"August!" cried van Rheijn, evidently much moved at his friend's earnestness and sincerity. "May you not be taking too partial and unfair a view of the situation?"

"My dear fellow," replied van Beneden, "just listen to what I am about to tell you, and then I will leave you to judge for yourself—

"Among the mass of documents relating to this Tio Siong Mo's business, I came upon some remarks made by a very highly placed official, a man perfectly competent to form a correct opinion; and who had, in fact, been consulted on this very occasion. His remarks run thus:

"'The salaries paid to the officials who are employed in checking the trade in contraband opium are wholly insufficient; and in the discharge of their most arduous duties, these public servants receive no support at all. The consequence of this is, that hardly a single person who is properly qualified for the work will ever offer his services. In what manner, then, are those places filled? Why, in the simplest manner possible. Individuals are appointed quite at random and are then placed under the orders of some Resident or other. These poor creatures, who, as a general rule, have no very brilliant antecedents to boast of, and who know little or nothing of the opium trade, receive a salary of 150 guilders (£12 10s.) a month, and are stationed at such points as the smugglers are most likely to resort to. It follows, of course, from the nature of the case that these stations are far away from any inhabited spot, generally in the heart of some swamp or in the all but impenetrable jungle on the north coast of Java. In such localities there can be no question of a house; and some of these men have to hire a small bamboo hut at the rate of 25 or 30 guilders a month, or else they run up a kind of rough shanty at their own expense. They have no staff whatever—there being no money to provide one—and thus, on an emergency, they have to apply for help to the chiefs of the nearest dessas, and that is very much like going to the devil for confession. Moreover, the Residents compel these people to keep two horses, which animals they must purchase for themselves, and they have to pay 10 guilders a month at least for forage for each horse. If now we take into consideration deductions for widows' and orphans' fund, then these wretched creatures receive only about 102 guilders a month, out of which they must find house rent and servants' wages, leaving them, say 67 guilders to live upon, to find themselves in dress, and to keep their often numerous families. Now, the question is, how can such persons manage to live at all in even the most frugal manner? How do they manage to keep body and soul together? They have no other resource than to apply to the opium-farmer for assistance, and in him they always find a most obliging money-lender. The whole question, then, comes to this: Are not such officers forced by mere pressure of circumstances to squeeze as much out of their wretched billet as can be got out of it?'

"And thus, you see, my dear Edward, that all these men either are, or very soon get to be, under the thumb of the opium-farmers, and the consequences of such a state of things are, you must grant, inevitable. By the side of the note I read to you just now, I found a list—it was a long list—of the names of such individuals as, either for neglect of duty or for having aided and abetted the smugglers, had been dismissed the service. There were others who were mere puppets in the farmers' hands, and who could not venture on the slightest remonstrance if the farmer himself was implicated in the smuggling trade. Then there was a third—alas! the list was a very short one—of officials who undertook to perform their duties conscientiously, and who, looking upon a smuggler as a smuggler, whether he happened to be an opium-farmer or not, were determined to put down the illegal traffic whoever might be engaged in it. I regret, however, to have to add that those names very quickly disappear from the scene. The Residents soon found fault with such men—they had no tact—no management—in fact, some ground of complaint was sure to be found. And then, of course, the Government does not like to see the farmers, so long as they pay their contract money regularly into the treasury, annoyed by opposition of any kind."

"But," exclaimed Grenits, somewhat warmly, "what becomes, at that rate, of the assertion made over and over in Parliament by the Colonial Secretary, that the abuse of opium is in every possible way kept in check? As far as I can make out from your statement, the Government seems, indirectly of course, actually to protect the smuggling by the farmers, and these, equally of course, in order to dispose of their contraband, press the drug by all means, legal or illegal, upon the helpless population."

"The sum and substance of all I have told you is simply this," said van Beneden. "No man who has the slightest respect for himself can or will undertake any office for the suppression of opium smuggling, and therefore a lower class of people must be employed, and thence, you see, it becomes possible for the tricks and dodges of such companies as Hok Bie to succeed."

"By Jove!" cried van Nerekool, "that's another nice little glimpse into the charming situation which the system of opium-farming has created. Come! now we are about it, we had better exhaust the unsavoury subject as far as we can. Did you not say just now, van Rheijn, that you also had an opium tale to tell?"

"Oh, yes," replied Edward, "and something else besides that."

"Indeed!" said Grashuis; "go on then. I thought I was pretty well informed; but every moment I am making fresh discoveries."

"Now, gentlemen," said van Nerekool, "are you all furnished with cigars? Van Rheijn, we are waiting to hear you."

"I have had a letter from Murowski," began van Rheijn.

"From Murowski?" cried one.

"From our Pole?"

"From our doctor?"

"Yes, gentlemen, from our expert at the scientific opium-smoke. Now, as his letter contains very few, if any, secrets, and that moreover it is addressed to us in general, I need not follow our host's example; and I will read it to you in full."

"But, my dear fellow," said Grenits, "it is getting late, nearly nine o'clock. Is there anything in that letter about butterflies?"

"Oh, yes."

"And about beetles and snakes?"

"Oh yes, certainly."

"Then, I say! heaven help us, those entomologists are so long-winded; they don't spare you a single claw, not an antenna, not a shard!"

"Oh, you won't find it so bad as all that," laughed van Rheijn; "just listen."

"'My dear friend, in your last letter you ask me how I pass the time at Gombong. At first, I must confess, it was tedious work and everything looked very black. You know, I was rather smitten with Agatha van Bemmelen, and I have reason to flatter myself that she used not to shut her little peepers very hard when she happened to meet me at Santjoemeh. So, when I first came here, my thoughts ran entirely on her; I detested my new place, and cursed the man who had played me the scurvy trick of having me transferred. Of entomology there was no question. Two or three times I went out and tried to get some specimens, but I failed wofully. Wherever I went, in whatever direction I took my walks, there was but one picture before my eyes—the image of my Agatha's sparkling eyes and my Agatha's rosy cheeks.

"'So utterly lost was I in rapture that the rarest specimens in butterflies fluttered past my very nose without my so much as holding out my net. I gave the whole thing up in despair, and tossed all my apparatus into a corner. But, what to do with oneself at Gombong? The officers of the garrison were busy enough; but I had nothing—absolutely nothing—to occupy my time. The climate of Gombong is a wretched one—most miserably healthy, no chance of ever getting a patient here! Being a devout Catholic, I sent up a little prayer every now and then for a good epidemic, or at least some case worthy of keeping one's interest going—nothing of the kind!'"

"Well now," cried Theodoor, "did you ever hear of such a fellow, praying for an epidemic! Such a chap as that ought to be put out of the colony altogether—he is fit only for the new lunatic asylum at Buitenzorg!"

"Nonsense!" retorted van Rheijn, "does not every one pray for his daily bread? Does not our friend van Beneden here pray for a good lawsuit—and that is, perhaps, not much less serious a matter than an epidemic. But let me go on.

"'Seeing that my prayers were not heard, I sought refuge in poetry;—perhaps I might say I prayed and wrote verses alternately. I celebrated my well-beloved in alexandrines, in iambics, in pentameters, in hexameters, in odes, in lyrics, in sonnets, in stanzas, in German, in Polish—'"

"That must have sounded well!" interrupted Grashuis.

"'—In Polish, in French, nay, even in Latin!'"

"In Latin!" exclaimed Grenits, with a shout of laughter, "the fellow must have gone raving mad!"

"Just fancy the poor child receiving an ode from her adorer entitled '*Solis occasus*,'—and '*Virgini Agathæ pulcherrimæ Bemmelensi dedicatus*'—I should like to have seen her little phiz," cried van Beneden.

"Do stop all that nonsense," remonstrated van Rheijn, who nevertheless was laughing as heartily as the others, and when silence had been restored, he continued:

"'And Heaven only knows how much paper I might have wasted had not suddenly the news reached me that my adored Agatha was engaged, and was, indeed, on the point of being married. Then I crumpled up all my poetical effusions, and that very evening made a nice little fire of them. They were of some use in that way in keeping off the mosquitoes and other such like vermin. I invited all the officers of the garrison to a jolly good champagne supper; and, after having passed a night in which I rivalled the Seven Sleepers of holy memory—I arose next morning a new man—perfectly cured!—'"

"That Pole is a practical fellow," cried Grashuis. "I say, Charlie, you should take a leaf out of his book!"

"'Thereupon I resumed my insect hunting, and then, for the first time, it dawned upon me that the hemiptera, the diptera, the hymenoptera, the lepidoptera, the coleoptera—'"

"I say, I say!" cried Grenits, "might you not skip all these barbarous words. That a Pole like Murowski makes use of them is excusable perhaps—he knows no better; but that he should inflict them upon us!—it is unpardonable."

"Oh, well!" replied van Rheijn, "I have almost done—

"'—The coleoptera, the crustaceans are really our best and truest friends, and that they would, after all, afford me the most wholesome recreation. I happened to be in luck's way. Patients there were none, and, to make assurance doubly sure, a medical officer, and therefore a colleague of mine, had arrived here in Gombong. He had obtained three months' leave, and, in this mild and singularly equable climate, he hoped to find a cure for an incipient liver-complaint. This gentleman was willing, he was indeed quite eager, to take my place in any unforeseen emergency, if it were only to break the monotony of his existence out here. I quickly availed myself of this favourable opportunity to ask our military chief for eight days' leave to go on a trip into the Karang Bollong mountains and give myself up to my passion for entomology.

"'"By all means," said the kind-hearted captain, "by all means, you go and catch butterflies and snoutbeetles. Only see that in those wild mountain districts you don't come to grief; and, mind you, be back again in time."

"'An hour after, I had shouldered my gun, slung on my game-bag; and, with the tin box for my collection strapped to my back, I was on the war-path, my servant following with the other necessaries. From Gombong I marched through the dessas Karang djah, Ringodono and Pring-toetoel, and there I was in the heart of the mountain country. That journey I did not make in a single day; but I took my time, and spent two days in covering the ground.

"'I will not tire you with an account of my insect-hunt, that would, in fact, be casting pearls before swine.'"

"Upon my word, that is a good one!" exclaimed Grenits, laughing. "Our Pole is exquisitely polite!"

"Well," laughed van Rheijn, "he is paying you back in your own coin, you remember what you said about 'barbarous words' just now. But let me get on.

"'But yet I must tell you that my trip was very successful. I have every reason to be satisfied; for among many other rare and valuable specimens, I secured a fine Ulysses and a splendid Priamos. But what will constitute the real glory of my collection is an Atlas, a truly magnificent creature, which, with outspread wings, covers an area of nearly a foot square. I will not however dwell on these matters. I know you take no interest in them. No, no, I have a subject to write upon which will prove much more attractive to yourself and to your friends. Our experiment in opium-smoking has been haunting me ever since I witnessed it; and I have by no means forgotten the conversation we held on that occasion. What I then heard and saw has opened my eyes and my ears, and has made me very attentive whenever the opium question is mentioned. And, I must say, that I have here been brought to the very spot where I am able to glean most interesting information about the use of that drug. In my wanderings through the Karang Bollong mountains, I have been brought into contact with the gathering of the far-famed birds' nests. Whether you gentlemen are acquainted with that source of the Dutch revenue, I know not; but in order to come to the subject I wish to lay before you, that is, the abuse of opium and the encouragement the Government gives to that abuse, I must give you a short account of this most interesting gathering of birds' nests.

You must, for the present at least, take my word for the truth of every syllable I write—'"

"The deuce we must!" cried Grenits, "he is rather exacting!"

"I bet we shall have a lot of learned stuff inflicted upon us. The prigs which the German Universities turn out can be pedantic to the last degree."

"No fear," replied van Rheijn, "for my part I must say that I have found in this letter, a great number of highly interesting particulars. But I must get on.

"'The Karang Bollong mountain range is, as you are probably aware, a spur of the Goenoeng Djampong which again forms the connecting link between the Midangang mountains and the Goenoeng Batoer. The bulk of these Karang Bollong mountains consists of extensive chalkbeds which form the table-land known as Goenoeng Poleng; and, on the side of the sea, these chalk-beds are surrounded by a broad band of trachyte rock which rises perpendicularly out of the Indian Ocean. In this massive wall of trachyte the ocean, with its mighty breakers rolling in from the South Pole upon Java's coast, has washed numerous holes or cavities, some of which extend to a considerable distance underground. It is in the innermost recesses of these caves that men find the nests of a certain kind of swallow which the natives call *manoek lawet*, and to which the Zoologists give the name of *hirundo esculenta*.'"

"Didn't I tell you so?" cried Grenits indignantly; "the Pole is beginning already to bring in his Latin names. Heaven only can tell what may be in store for us!"

"And what about me, then?" remarked van Rheijn. "I have had to read the whole letter! You need not trouble yourself, that Latin will come all right enough. I go on:

"'—— give the name of *hirundo esculenta*. The nests consist of a slimy substance which is found in the stomach of the birds. These little swallows cover the spot in the rock they have selected for their nest with an extremely fine coating of this gelatinous stuff. As soon as this layer has dried and has had time to harden, they apply a second coat, which again must have time to dry before they can proceed with their building. And thus they go on gradually and layer by layer until the nest is complete. When it is finished it looks like a saucer of small diameter which has been broken in two with the line of fracture cemented to the wall of stone. Thus these little nests consist of a hardened gelatinous mass of a light yellow colour and which, when they are of superior quality, ought to be somewhat transparent.'"

"And the Chinese eat such trash as that and like it?" cried Grashuis curling his lip in disgust.

"Do let me go on," said van Rheijn.

"'When soaked in water and properly cooked these nests are looked upon by the Chinese as the rarest delicacy. A cup of broth made of that gelatinous substance represents, in their estimation, the most delicious beverage that can gratify the human palate. They ascribe to this soup rare medicinal virtues and prize it as a never-failing aphrodisiac. In my opinion this latter is the only quality which gives value to the nests.'"

"And this again is the sort of thing out of which the Dutch Government makes a revenue!" exclaimed Grenits. "It is a very lucky thing that the ingathering of these nests can only be carried out on a small scale, or else, no doubt, some means would be found to force this kind of food upon such Chinese as do not, at present, crave for it; just as the farmers do their utmost to drive the population into their infamous opium-dens."

"'The gathering of these nests,'" continued van Rheijn still reading Murowski's letter, "'takes place three times a year. The first gathering begins in the latter part of April and is called "Oedoean kesongo." The second begins in the middle of August and is called "Oedoean telor," and the third, the "Oedoean kapat," takes place in December. Now that kind of birdsnesting, my friends, is an occupation which I very willingly leave to the Javanese who make it their business. To gain the entrance of one of those caves they must clamber down the perpendicular face of the rock along ladders. The ladder, for instance, which leads to the mouth of the Djoembling cave is only 660 feet long. My heart beat high with desire to make a trip to these subterranean vaults. But—when I laid myself flat down and got my head over the edge of the rock while a couple of Javanese were holding on to my legs—when I saw that rottang ladder swinging hither and thither in the breeze sometimes clinging to the wall and then again curving inward and for a while lost to the eye. When, at a giddy depth below, I saw the huge breakers come tumbling in and forming there at the foot of the rocks a savage scene, a wild and whirling chaos of spouting water, of dazzling foam and of blinding spray. When my ear caught the hoarse thunder of their charge while I felt the very stone under me quiver with the shock—then, I must confess a feeling of sickening horror came over me; I started back involuntarily, and nothing on earth could have induced me to plant my foot on the crazy ladder which, a few moments ago, I had made up my mind to descend.

"'But how grand, how magnificent, how sublime was the spectacle! The towering waves which like a stately row of hills came moving along the intense azure blue of the Indian Ocean—that graceful curve of the billow as it neared the pumice reefs which lie at the base of the mass of trachyte—then the thundering fall of this mighty crest toppling over, as it were, into a sea of seething milk in which every drop, every foam-speck glittered in the rays of the tropical sun—that finely divided spray which hung over the watery mass and wrapped it as in a veil of transparent silver-gauze—all this, my friends, formed a spectacle which can never be effaced from my memory but will dwell there engraven as on tables of stone. At times, when a wave of unusual height came rolling in, the entrance of the caves would be completely swallowed up and hidden and the water driven into the interior would continue its perpetual work of excavation. Then, for a few moments it seemed as if the holes had disappeared. But presently, when the wave flowed back again, the water, impelled by the tremendous force of the compressed air within, would rush forth like a horizontal fountain five or six hundred feet in length, spouting and hissing and blowing with a roar which was perfectly appalling, and forming whirls and high-flowing eddies in the retreating wave.

"'No, no, no, I durst not touch that swinging ladder; but I have nevertheless made up my mind to penetrate by some other means into the interior of those mysterious cavities. The natives here tell me that when the south-east trade-wind is far from the south-coast of Java, on very calm days a flat-bottomed boat may enter the Goewah Temon, which is the name of one of the grots. The loerah of the dessa Ajo has promised me to keep a canoe in readiness for me, if I will give him notice beforehand; and, on the first favourable opportunity I mean to make the attempt. Meanwhile, however, I have had to satisfy myself with a description of this birdsnesting which I soon hope to witness in person, and this is what one of the chiefs has told me concerning it.

"'From the mouth of the caves the Javanese have stretched a couple of cables along the interior wall. The lower of these rottang-cables serves as foot-hold, the upper is grasped in one hand, while with the other hand, the man engaged in the work picks the birds' nests from the rock. When the hand cannot reach them the man detaches them by means of a long bamboo pole furnished with an iron hook, and as they fall he has to catch them in a small hand net. As you may suppose, the taking of these swallows' nests is an extremely perilous undertaking. First to clamber down that ladder to an extreme depth along the perpendicular face of the rock and dangling over that boiling sea, then to penetrate into these holes into which the ocean thrusts its waves. In rough weather the work has to be stopped altogether in many of the caves; and, not unfrequently, it happens that the ropes are washed away and the poor fellows who trust to them are dashed to pieces or miserably drowned. You will ask then, perhaps, how can people be found to venture on so hazardous an undertaking? You know, of course, that no race on earth is more attached to its native soil than the Javanese. That characteristic is found in this part of the island also. There is perhaps no wilder and more ungrateful soil in this world than this region in the Karang Bollong mountains. Nothing, or next to nothing, can be made out of agriculture. The tiny rice-fields one meets with here and there on the mountain slopes, are not worth mentioning; and, as far as tradition reaches, the scanty population of this part of Java has always supported itself and does still support itself, by collecting these edible nests.

"'Whether they fared better or worse before the Dutch government appropriated that source of income to itself, I have not been able to ascertain. But one thing is certain, that the pay these poor wretches receive from the Government is something worse than pitiful. I have now lying before me a statement drawn up by an official in this part of the country, from which I gather that, for every sack of 80 nests delivered into the Government stores, the man who collects them gets a sum of 15—let us put it down in words—of fifteen cents (about 3d)!'"

"Aye but," said Grashuis, "before we follow the grumblings of our Pole any further, it would be well to know what is the commercial value of those 80 nests."

"As a merchant," remarked Grenits, "I can at once supply you with the information you require. The Chinese are always ready to give five thousand guilders for a pikol of nests, and, since one hundred of them weigh about one kattie and the pikol contains one hundred katties, our Government receives four hundred guilders, while it sends the poor devil of a native about his business with 15 cents! By Heaven it is a crying shame!”

“But has not the Government other expenses to meet?” asked Grashuis.

“Allow me to continue,” said van Rheijn, “I promise you an answer to your question, August.”

“All right, drive ahead!”

“‘It is true,’” continued van Rheijn, “‘that when a man has good luck he may deliver 12 bags.’”

“That comes to one guilder eighty cents (about 3s.),” cried Grenits! “and then he must be in luck! God help the poor fellow!”

“Now do not be constantly interrupting me!” cried Edward impatiently.

“‘One must be a Javanese to encounter such perils for so miserable a pittance; for, to realize that magnificent sum, the poor devil must make several trips to the cave which has been assigned to him. The shortest gathering always lasts three weeks, and the longest sometimes goes on for more than two months. Now, how can the native be induced, for such utterly inadequate pay, to face this perpetual and deadly risk? I fancy I can see that question hovering on your lips, and if you will bear with me for a few moments I will tell you. In the first place the Government has secured the co-operation of the native chiefs. You know what a dependent race are the Javanese, how they trust implicitly to their chiefs, and these men are indeed paid on a much more liberal scale. Where the actual worker receives his three shillings, the loerah, for instance, is paid twenty guilders (£1 13s. 4d.), besides a number of perquisites of all kinds, and he receives this, mind you, merely for superintending the work, as it is called. Yet it is probable that the respect and obedience of even a Javanese would not endure such miserably inadequate pay, and therefore the Government has devised another means of binding these poor creatures hand and foot, and that means, my dear friends, is—opium!

“‘I will not trouble you with all the superstitious fads which the Government not only tolerates but pays for in the matter of this gathering of birds' nests; nor will I speak of the idolatrous worship of Njahi Ratoe Segoro Kidoel which precedes every expedition, and which also is paid for out of the public purse. I will merely point out to you the use which is made of opium,

the pernicious effect of which, when taken in anything like excessive quantities, you have yourselves been able to observe.

“‘Well then, let me tell you that in everything which has any relation whatever to this gathering of nests the current coin is opium.

“‘If the wajang and toppeng-players have to be sent for, five petty chiefs and four dessa-folk are despatched to fetch them. For this piece of service each of the former receives one kedawang, and each of the latter half a kedawang of opium, the kedawang being equivalent to about two matas. For the cleansing and clearing of the Goewah Bollong loerahs and other chiefs are specially appointed, the former receiving each two and the latter one kedawang of opium. The wajang and toppeng-players receive on their arrival, sixteen kedawangs apiece and four kedawangs for sadjen or offering, and, on their departure, they are paid with a further present of sixteen kedawangs of opium.

“‘In the Goewah Bollong a feast is always held before the commencement of the expeditions; and for this feast, a certain number of bullocks and one goat have to be killed. For the slaughtering of each of these animals eight kedawangs of opium are paid. For each quarter of the slaughtered animals which must be brought in and carried by one petty chief and two dessa men, the chief is paid one, and the men have half a kedawang of opium apiece. When the ladders are brought to the edge of the cliff, a ceremony which requires two chiefs and two men, the former receive one kedawang, and the latter half a kekawang of opium.

“‘But I have not finished yet, the abuse of opium goes much further than that. My friends, I beg you have patience and read on.

“‘At the festival itself the following quantities are served out: to each loerah and each petty chief two kedawangs, and to every guest one kedawang. I have now lying before me a paper from which the following words are an extract:

“‘“It is impossible to give, with any exactness, the number of persons present at these customary festivals; but seeing that every guest has his portion of opium served out to him, it may be taken for granted that no one who has the slightest right to be present, fails to avail himself of it. At the opening of every cave eight kedawangs are served out, and when the ropes are fastened another eight kedawangs are paid.”

“‘During the ingathering of the nests—but how shall I get through it all? Let me try to be brief. The loerah of Goewah Jedeh gets 76, the loerah of Goewah Dahar gets 64, the one at Goewah Mandoe Loro 44, and the other loerahs receive 40 kedawangs apiece. The tockans of these caves receive each 54, the bekels 24, and the sekeps each 12 kedawangs of opium.

"'But even this is not all. The dessas in which the ladders are made are paid in opium, the persons appointed to mount guard over the nests when they are gathered receive their pay in opium. The transmission of the produce, the carrying to and fro of orders, the return of the ladders, the guarding of the caves—everything—everything—is paid with the same fatal drug. In one word, the entire thing is simply an opium debauch on a colossal scale; and it is the surest means of accustoming the people to the use of the deadly narcotic. But—why should I further dilate upon this matter, my letter is already, I fear, too long and I have still to communicate to you certain things which I know will be of the greatest interest to you.'"

"Is there much more of the letter?" asked Grashuis.

"Yes, I have some pages more to read," replied van Rheijn.

"You have given us quite a budget already," remarked van Beneden.

"True; but it is extremely interesting," said Grenits.

"By Jove, those Poles know how to make use of their eyes."

"He has learnt that lesson from the Germans, you know they steal with their eyes."

"True, witness the Franco-German war in which the Teutons proved that they knew more about France than the French authorities themselves."

"Don't you think," asked van Rheijn, "we had better get on as fast as we can? The most interesting part of the letter is yet to come."

These last words he spoke with a strange look at Charles van Nerekool.

"Had we not better have a drink first?" suggested Grenits.

"By Jove, yes!" cried van Rheijn, "my throat is as dry as a rasp."

"Sabieio!" cried van Nerekool, "fill the glasses."

While the servant performed that duty the gentlemen lit a fresh cigar, rocked themselves for a while in their rocking-chairs and then were all attention.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MUROWSKI ON THE TRACK.—AN OPIUM SALE AT SANTJOEMEH.

"NOW then," said van Rheijn, "let us proceed.

"'Two days before my leave had expired and that, therefore, I should have to return to my garrison duties at Gombong, I started very early in the morning before the break of day from the dessa Ajo in which I had passed the night. My intention was to explore the Western slopes of the Goenoeng Poleng, and I expected that this trip would bring a rich harvest to my collection. And, my friends, I must tell you that my hopes were amply—very amply—realised. For I secured an Arjuna, a large and most lovely butterfly with pointed golden-green wings fringed with a deep velvety band of black. It was a rare specimen I can assure you, and absolutely perfect and uninjured. The day before, one of the dessa-people at Ajo had brought me a Cymbium Diadema, a fine brown shell spotted with white, which the man assured me, he had picked up on the sands in one of the creeks on the South coast of the island of Noesa Kambangan. I purchased it from the fellow for a mere song.

"'But enough of this: I return to my subject.

"'As I told you, I had started some time before the break of day and had got some distance from the dessa Ajo when the dawn began to tinge the entire mountain range of Karang Bollong. My path was not a very pleasant one to travel along; for it took me right across all the ravines which run down from the heights. These are funnel-shaped, exceedingly tortuous; and twisting and turning in all directions they run down to the plain at the foot of the range, in which the Kali Djetis flows onward to the sea.

"'As gradually I mounted higher and higher, the panorama stretched out at my feet became more and more imposing. The fresh invigorating morning air and the truly magnificent scenery about me, filled me with delight; and every now and then I actually forgot my passion for butterflies wholly absorbed as I was in the glories which lay around me.

"'At length I gained a ridge between two pretty deep ravines, and I was stopping for a few moments to regain my breath after the exertion of climbing the steep ascent up which my path had led me. In both these ravines little brooks were gurgling. They were mere threads of water hurrying down the Goenoeng Poleng, and it was refreshing to look upon them as they frisked and danced and foamed along their strange zigzag course. From the eminence on which I then stood, they looked like ribbons of silver tape unconsciously displaying their beauty to the morning air. The ravine which I had just left was strewn with big blocks of trachyte flung about in confusion, great masses of ruin detached, no doubt, from the central range. Such was the case also in the other ravine into which I was preparing to descend; but between the boulders and scanty shrubs, my eye suddenly caught the attap-roof of a Javanese house. From the place where I stood, I could catch sight only of the front verandah; but yet that small hut, situated there in the wild and lonely mountain range and at some distance from the dessa Ajo, arrested my attention. Can it be some misanthropist, I thought, who is living there so far away from the haunts of men? Through an open window, my eye could penetrate one of the rooms in the hut, and I thought I saw a snow-white bed-curtain waving to and fro under the influence of the morning breeze; I fancied also that I could distinguish a chair. Now all this greatly puzzled me; for your Javanese, as a rule, does not indulge in such luxuries, and, if he makes use of a curtain at all, he generally selects one of some gaudily coloured material.'"

Van Rheijn paused for a moment or two to take a drink of beer, and in doing so he cast a penetrating look upon Charles van Nerekool. The latter was sitting in his chair listlessly rocking himself up and down, and had very much the appearance of a man who listens but whose thoughts are travelling elsewhere.

"You are not listening to me, Charles," he cried! At this abrupt address van Nerekool started up out of his reverie.

"I?" he asked in confusion.

"Now, you see!" continued van Rheijn with a laugh, "while I am wasting my breath to get to the end of Murowski's budget, our friend the judge there is sitting in a brown study, his thoughts wandering heaven knows where, but certainly nowhere near the dessa Ajo. But wait a bit, you fellows, mark my words, you will see a change soon. The part most interesting to him is just coming. Now listen."

Van Nerekool shook his head and smiled incredulously, he puffed hard at his cigar, sat up straight in his chair and disposed himself to listen with concentrated attention.

Van Rheijn went on reading:

"'But, while I was thus standing, gazing and pondering, I heard far, far away beneath my feet, a noise of laughing, giggling and playing—in fact, the silvery tones of two girls' voices.

"'I stretched out my neck and cautiously peered about to find out, if possible, from whence those pleasant sounds proceeded; but it was in vain, I could discover nothing. I noticed, however, that the foaming brook beneath me took a very sharp turn, and that close to its side grew a large Wariengien tree, whose massive foliage defied every inquisitive look; while, at the same time, a pretty little clump of shrubs shut out the view on either side. Meanwhile, the tittering and laughing went on, mingled every now and then with a playful little shriek, accompanied by the sound of plunging and splashing of water. Then it dawned upon me that yonder in that clear mountain stream, some girls were amusing themselves with bathing. What shall I say in excuse of my indiscretion? I suppose the best, in fact the only excuse I can offer, is that a man is neither a stock nor a stone. My road, moreover, led straight to the attractive spot; and thus, without, I fear, giving much thought to what I was doing, I found myself on the way to emulate Actaeon in his fatal curiosity, never in the least expecting to spy out a Diana.

"'So I cautiously clambered down the slopes, taking, as you may suppose, the most particular care not to make the least noise which might disturb the bathing nymphs. For a little while my path ran down directly to the Wariengien tree, which overshadowed a considerable area. If the course of the narrow path had only continued in that direction a little longer it must have brought me to the very foot of the tree. But, suddenly, I came upon a large rock, and there the road ran to the left and seemed to shorten the way by leading straight to another bend in the creek. Most probably this led to some ford, for I could see the path on the other side of the brook, running up the side of the ravine. Now, what was I to do? I ought, like a good boy, to have followed the path no doubt; but my curiosity was stimulated by the splashing and laughing, which now seemed much nearer to me than before. I confess, the temptation was too great, and I left the path in order to get up to the Wariengien tree. Good luck seemed to favour me. From the rock which barred the road I could see a gentle slope thickly overgrown with bushes. In these numberless butterflies were fluttering about; but, will you believe me? I never so much as gave them a look or a thought. I had left my tin box and my net behind at the foot of the rock so as to be quite free in my movements. Like some Dajak or some Alfoer of Papua I stole along from bush to bush.' "

The young men burst out into a loud shout of laughter.

"I can see our Pole," laughed Grenits, "sneaking along like an Alfoer, in something like Adam's costume, up to the bathers."

"Yes," said van Rheijn, laughing as heartily as the others, "with only an ewah round his loins.

"But pray let me go on, we are coming to the most interesting and most important part. Are you listening to me, Charles?"

"I am not losing a single syllable," said the latter, moving somewhat uneasily in his chair. "Do make haste."

"'—From bush to bush, and I got as near as I possibly could. At length I found myself standing before a kind of hedge which grew around the Wariengien, and made it impossible for me to advance any further. The magnificent wild-fig tree stood on the edge of an oval water-basin, which might have been washed out by the power of the stream, or might have been hewn by the hand of man out of the mass of gray trachyte rock. The pool itself appeared to be about 25 yards long, and perhaps 15 yards broad, and the heavy crown of the Wariengien cast a pleasant shadow right over it. It was fed from the brook of which, in fact, it formed a part, and the water, though deep, was so bright and clear that even the smallest pebbles could be seen distinctly at the bottom. These details, you must know, have only lately occurred to me; at that moment I had no time to pay any particular attention to them, something very different was engrossing my thoughts. For, in the centre of the pool, of which from my position I could survey about twenty feet, were swimming and splashing and frisking about two female forms. How shall I describe to you what I saw and what I felt without too painfully affecting one of your friends.' "

Here Edward stole another glance at his friend van Nerekool.

"Go on, go on!" cried the latter almost passionately as he caught the look.

"'Two female forms. Both had on the usual bathing dress of Javanese women, that is the sarong. You know how prettily, and how modestly too, the Indian beauties can coquet with that rather scanty garment—how they draw it up and

fasten it above the bosom; and, I presume, you can imagine how such a garment, when wet through and closely clinging to the limbs, rather serves to heighten than to veil the charms it is intended to conceal. That, however, I will leave to your fertile imaginations. Both girls were extremely beautiful, though each had her own style of beauty. One of them was decidedly a Javanese, the nose slightly turned up, the round cheeks and somewhat full lips, in fact the entire face, bore unmistakably the stamp of her nationality. For a few moments she stood still in a somewhat shallow part of the pool, and busied herself in readjusting her sarong, which had got rather loose in swimming. As she did so I could at once perceive that the young woman I had before me was in what is called an interesting condition.' "

Once again van Rheijn paused for an instant and shot a quick glance at van Nerekool.

The latter sat in his chair literally panting with excitement, and taking in every word with the most eager attention.

"Go on! Go on!" he murmured.

"'The other was altogether of much slimmer build Her bust, which the wet sarong could hardly conceal, showed that it had been in contact with the European corset, and her features proclaimed her of totally different race from her companion. Had the skin not been brown I should at once have pronounced her to be a European, especially as her hair, though jet-black, was silky, and fell around her as a mantle, and, while she was swimming, floated on the water behind in a mass of wavy curls. Then, I thought, I could trace something of Arabian origin in the fair creature I saw moving in the crystal stream. Arabian! why that could not be; for at the very same moment I thought I recognised her very features.

"'My friends, I am utterly unable to describe to you the lovely scene I was just then gazing upon. No pen is eloquent enough for that. It would need the brush of some great artist to catch the glow and colour of that entrancing view.

"'Quite unconscious that, in that lonely pool far away from any human dwelling, and in the recesses of such a wilderness, any indiscreet eye was watching them—the two girls, like real water nymphs, were gaily disporting themselves. They pursued one another, trying to duck each other in the stream, while they had the greatest trouble to prevent their sarongs from getting loose and falling down. That game lasted a considerable time, it seemed as if the pretty creatures could not make up their mind to leave the cool refreshing stream. At length the slimmer of the two girls said: "Come, baboe, it is time to go home."' "

"Ha, ha, it was Malay they were speaking and not Javanese at all!" remarked Grashuis.

"No, no," replied Edward, glancing uneasily at van Nerekool, "it was not Javanese; but let me read on, we are now coming to the *dénouement*.

"'The fair swimmer got to the side of the pool and sat down on the rocky bank allowing her little feet to paddle in the water. She presently began to wring out her mass of hair and, as she was sitting with her face turned away from me, from the position I occupied I could only catch a glimpse of part of her back as she lifted up her arms to tie up her hair. Was it the light in my eyes? Was it all a mere delusion? Did my eyes play me false altogether? I began to think that her back was not nearly so dark as her face, her neck and her hands. Puzzled beyond measure I was determined to get a better view. I grasped a branch of one of the shrubs which were around me, I hoisted myself up and bent forward as far as I could! Alas! —no, rather let me say thank God!—in making that movement I slipped. A big lump of stone, dislodged, no doubt, by the motion of my feet, went rolling down the slope and fell down plump into the water to the right of and close beside the fair bather. It was just by the merest chance that I did not tumble in myself, what a fright the poor little dear would have been in! It was bad enough as it was. At the splash made by the stone the girl uttered a cry of terror, she suddenly moved to the left and started to fly. In doing so her sarong must have hitched in some projecting stone, and—

"'By all the gods, she was a pure-bred European! Face, arms, hands, neck, shoulders, all were brown; but for the rest she was lily-white—that beautiful creamy white which is so characteristic of brunettes.

"'Then it all became clear to me—Miss van Gulpendam—she who had so mysteriously disappeared—that face with which I felt all along I was familiar— Oh, there was no possibility of a mistake, I knew her well enough now in spite of the dark colouring of her skin. Though the girls could not see me behind my thick hedge, yet they were much startled and frightened. They at once snatched up their clothes and fled up the path which leads to the hut I had seen on the ridge, and as they ran I could overhear the Javanese saying to her companion: "Don't be alarmed, Nana, there is no person there." Probably she meant to say that the stone was loosened by the movement of some animal or perhaps she ascribed it to mere chance. In spite, however, of this, both of them hurried out of sight as fast as they could, and soon the sheltering roof of their little hut received them.

"'It was then only that I began to feel how unpardonable had been my indiscretion and, to spare the young ladies' feelings as much as I could, I remained for a long time concealed. When I thought they must have given up looking out, I sneaked as quietly as possible, under cover of the bushes, to the bottom of the ravine, and there a bend in the path soon enabled me to get away unperceived. Such, my friends, is my adventure in the Karang Bollong mountains. I have sent you this news as soon as possible for I know how happy my communication will make one of you. I will not venture to give you any counsel as to what you ought to do under the circumstances; but I place myself entirely at your disposal and shall at any time be ready to point out the little hut to you.'"

"Anna!—Anna found!" exclaimed van Nerekool, jumping up out of his chair and striding impatiently up and down the inner gallery.

"What do you intend to do?" asked van Beneden.

"What I intend to do? Why, to-morrow morning at daybreak I am off— I will—!"

"My dear fellow," said Grashuis, restraining, as well as he could, his friend's impatience and excitement, "now, pray, do not be in a hurry."

"How can you talk such nonsense!" cried van Nerekool—"Do not be in a hurry!— And what if meanwhile she should again disappear?"

"I do not think," remarked van Rheijn, "that there is much danger of that. I suppose the girls have by this time got over their fright—indeed there was not much to terrify them—and as they have probably not seen any one since of whom they can have the least suspicion, they will come to the conclusion that they were scared by a false alarm. I do not think they will for a moment think of leaving that lonely spot."

"My dear friends," said van Beneden, "I believe the very best thing we can do at present is to go to bed. It is now late, and we ought to have time to think this matter over. At all events, Charles must certainly not think of starting to-morrow morning; by doing so he would spoil his whole career. A man in his position must not run away from his post as a deserter."

"Yes," said Charles, "you fellows had better go to bed. I shall sit down at once and write for leave of absence."

"That's right," quoth Theodoor Grenits. "In that case we shall have a few days for quiet reflection. And now, Charles, my boy, I have no need to ask for leave, I intend to go with you on your journey; here's my hand upon it!"

The young men hereupon shook hands and each went to his own lodging, while, in the distance, the sounds of revelry at the Chinaman's house were still resounding.

Van Nerekool applied for leave of absence; but found that it took some time to obtain it. Mr. Greveland was just at that time so very busy that he could not undertake to grant Charles' request, however eagerly this latter might press for it. The President, however, forwarded van Nerekool's application to the authorities at Batavia. Thus Charles was forced for some days to wait with such patience as he could command.

Meanwhile, however, events were taking place which exercise some influence on the course of our story and which we will now proceed to narrate.

Not long after the nuptials between Lim Ho and pretty and wealthy Ngow Ming Nio had been solemnized, the great day came round on which the opium monopoly for the years 18—, 18—, and 18— had to be assigned. This was a most important event for the whole official world, and one which, in the well known financial position of matters at home, was especially significant to those who were in authority at Batavia and Santjoemeh. For, if the Colonial Secretary could but show a goodly number of millions as the produce of the sale of opium-contracts, why then he and his colleagues might feel themselves pretty safe in their seats. They thought, and not without excellent reason, that if they could but manage to increase the revenue they would, by that means, gain infinite credit in the Parliament at home. It need hardly be said therefore that every nerve was strained to obtain so desirable a result.

Resident van Gulpendam had, as our readers know, another, that is a private, reason for making every exertion; and he left no stone unturned to induce as many as he possibly could to come and bid for the lucrative contract. His agents were out on all sides trying to get the rival companies to enter into competition, and in these efforts his handsome wife was of the greatest assistance to him. The proud woman had set her heart and soul upon seeing her husband's breast adorned with the "bertes knabbeldat."

Now that the existing contracts were fast running out, and that by the last day of December, the opium-monopolies for the different districts had to be again put up to the highest bidder, the greatest activity prevailed. The strictest precautions against smuggling were taken along the entire coast-line—against such smuggling, be it understood, as was not carried on by the farmers themselves. Bandoelans and policemen were everywhere on the alert, and were left to do pretty much as they pleased in their visitations of suspected houses, or in their search for opium on the persons of the unhappy creatures to whom they might owe a grudge. Especially did those suffer from their insolence, who either did not make use of opium at all, or who used it in strict moderation. The success which these stringent measures obtained was rapid and complete. The sale of opium by the farmers rose in an extraordinary manner now that contraband wares could no longer be obtained, and the retail price of the pernicious drug rose in proportion.

"If we could only have that kind of thing always going on!" cried Lim Ho who, when the conversation turned upon opium, could not always keep a discreet tongue in his head. But Lim Yang Bing, who was older and wiser, and who, above all things, feared competition at the coming sales, merely shrugged his shoulders. He would have been glad enough to say nothing about this sudden increase in his daily receipts; but, with so many opium-dens under his control, secrecy was well-nigh impossible.

But Resident van Gulpendam did more than this. He, through his agents, cleverly spread the report that the Government intended largely to increase the number of opium-licenses in his Residence. This had its effect also, and presently a feverish excitement began to show itself in the rival Chinese camps.

On the important day of the sale, a brand-new flag of extraordinary dimensions, the finest and brightest that could be found, was waving in the morning breeze from the flag-staff in front of the residential mansion. On that day the whole body of oppassers had been mustered. They numbered over twenty men, all dressed in new uniforms with bright yellow belts furbished up as smartly as possible. The native soldiers also on sentry were in full-dress, and they marched up and down before the steps of the Residence with a solemnity and gravity of demeanour, which plainly showed that they were impressed with a full consciousness of the responsibilities which rested upon them.

To add to the brilliancy of the display, Resident van Gulpendam had summoned to Santjoemeh a couple of assistant residents and a couple of controllers from the adjoining districts. These gentlemen, together with all the native chiefs then present in the capital, assembled towards ten o'clock in the front gallery. All were, of course, in full official dress with sprigs of orange and oak-leaves embroidered in silver on their collars. The orange, an emblem of purity; the oak, the type of manly vigour and independence. They had on white cashmere trousers with a broad gold stripe, and the regulation dress-sword by their sides.

Presently the Chinese contingent also began to arrive, all dressed in clean white jackets and black trousers monstrously wide in the legs, their heads carefully shaven and polished, while the long scalp-lock which forms the tail was treated with the greatest care, plaited skilfully and with almost mathematical exactness, and interwoven with red, blue, and white silk cord.

At first only a few idlers appeared strolling in merely out of curiosity to have a look at the proceedings. These were succeeded by other more wealthy men, the representatives of the various companies, who might be expected to enter into the competition. Last of all Lim Yang Bing and his son Lim Ho drove up and, as they stepped out of their carriage, they carefully scrutinized their countrymen present. For some time the Celestials mingled with the official personages, and formed a group in which salutations and hand-shakings bore witness to the cordiality existing between them. But when the soldier on guard struck one blow upon the gong which stood beside his sentry-box, and thus announced that it was half-past ten, Resident van Gulpendam accompanied by his private secretary—both in full-dress—entered the front gallery, while Mrs. van Gulpendam, on the arm of van Rheijn, appeared at one of the open doors.

The chiefs present all made a low bow, the sentries presented arms, the oppassers formed a line by the pajoeng stand, in which a gorgeous emblem of dignity was conspicuous.

The officials present now advanced in a body to pay their homage to the representative of the Governor-General who, in his turn, represents the King of the Netherlands in these far-away Asiatic regions.

Next, the Chinamen came forward to perform a similar duty, and after this the two groups of Europeans and Chinamen remained apart. A few of the latter, foremost among them Lim Yang Bing and Lim Ho, walked up to Laurentia, and gave her a courteous greeting. She was all affability and cordially shook hands with the pair as well as with some others, who were standing near; and then she invited all the babahs to come in and have something to drink.

"It is so frightfully hot just now in Santjoemeh!" she protested.

A faint smile passed over the Chinamen's wan and yellow features; they bowed their thanks as they cast significant looks at one another. Then they followed their fair guide through the inner gallery into the pandoppo. A large table stood there bearing a number of trays full of champagne glasses, while, under the table, might be seen little tubs of ice, in which the bottles with their silvered corks were neatly arranged.

"Open the champagne!" cried Laurentia to three or four attendants who stood by.

The corks popped, and in a few moments all the babahs, rich and poor, were standing glass in hand eager to be allowed the honour of touching glasses with the Njonja-Resident.

As a rule, your Chinaman is a great stickler for etiquette; and, on any ordinary occasion, they would no doubt have sipped their wine leisurely, with half-closed eyes as they have seen Europeans do; but now they behaved in a widely different manner. For fair Laurentia had informed them that, when they had the honour of drinking with a njonja, the glass must be emptied at a single draught.

"The gentlemen call that *ad fundum*," remarked the Chinese major.

"Just so, babah," replied Laurentia as she gave him a sly nudge.

In an instant every cup was drained.

"Fill the glasses!" she cried; and from that moment Mrs. van Gulpendam kept the waiters busy. On one pretext or another, she took care that the glasses were kept filled and that their contents were duly and speedily disposed of.

Meanwhile the Resident himself had been engaged in conversation with his friends and subordinates in the front gallery.

"What has become of our babahs?" he asked presently. "Come, gentlemen, I do not think we shall have cause to repent if we go and look them up. It is frightfully hot here. Don't you think so?"

Thus saying and wiping the perspiration from his brow with his cambric handkerchief, he led the way into the interior of the house followed by his embroidered and lace-covered staff.

"Ah, I thought as much!" he cried, as he entered the pandoppo, and then to the servants: "Look sharp, give the gentlemen glasses."

As this was going on, Laurentia slipped away unobserved leaving the lords of the creation to enjoy themselves in their own fashion.

The Resident whispered a few words to Kwee Siong Liem, one of the wealthiest Chinamen in Santjoemeh, and this latter, during the brief conversation, strove to cast furtive glances at Lim Yang Bing.

"I shall go as high as I possibly can, kandjeng toean," said the babah; "but I fear—"

"You need not be afraid," whispered van Gulpendam.

"Aye, but, kandjeng toean, the bidding will run up too high!"

"Don't forget, babah, that there are eight additional licenses specified in the contract."

"That's all very well, kandjeng toean; but—"

However, the kandjeng toean did not stay to listen to the Chinaman's objection. He stepped forward, took off his cocked hat, raised the glass which a servant had put into his hand and said:

"Here's success to the sale!" The sentiment drew forth cheers from the assembled Celestials on whom the generous wine of Veuve Clicquot was beginning to have an exhilarating effect.

"To the health of the kandjeng toean!" cried the assistant resident of police.

"To the health of the Chinese major!" shouted another and so it went on. To all these toasts ample justice was done. The little slanting eyes of the Celestials were really beginning to twinkle right merrily.

At length the clock struck eleven and the clear metallic sound rang quivering through the apartment.

"Now, gentlemen!" cried the Resident, "to business! But first allow me to inform those present here who may not happen to be successful in this competition, that in a few days the monopoly for the district of Bengawan will be put up to auction; and that, a couple of days after that again, another valuable contract will be offered for sale. You see, therefore, that there are rich, very rich profits awaiting many of you."

After having thus spoken, the Resident led the way into the inner gallery followed by the entire company. In this room stood a large table with a white marble top on which were scattered about a number of official papers and documents. At the head of this table van Gulpendam took up his position surrounded by his staff; and opposite him stood the crowd of Chinamen, the table separating the two groups from one another. On the wall of the room hung a very fine picture, a life-size, half-length portrait of King William III., and this picture formed the centre, as it were, of the two groups of Europeans and Asiatics.

"The secretary will now proceed to read out the conditions of the opium contract which we are about to dispose of," said the Resident very solemnly.

The official thus alluded to began at once, in the usual monotonous and almost unintelligible drone, to mumble a series of articles which he seemed to have by heart. Indeed, the whole thing was a mere formality. Those who had come prepared to bid for this Government contract were perfectly familiar with every word that paper contained. At the preamble, "In the name of the King," every head bowed deeply. One article, in which mention was made of the fact that the new opium farmer would have the privilege of opening a number of stores in addition to those specified in the former contract, the secretary took care to read out with an amount of distinctness and emphasis which could not fail to arrest the attention of all interested parties.

When this formality was ended, the Resident said: "The sum bid for the former contract which is now about to expire was twelve hundred and thirty-two thousand guilders— Who will make a higher bid?"

"Twelve hundred and thirty five!" cried a voice.

"Twelve hundred and forty thousand!" said another.

"Twelve hundred and fifty!" was heard in a corner.

"Twelve hundred and sixty!"

There was a pause of a few seconds.

"Twelve hundred and sixty is offered," quietly repeated van Gulpendam.

"Thirteen hundred thousand!" exclaimed Kwee Siong Liem who stood at one side of the table.

Lim Yang Bing had not yet spoken a word; but now he looked up, gave one inquiring look at his rival and cried:

"Fourteen hundred thousand!"

"Fifteen!"

The real battle had begun.

"Sixteen hundred thousand!" was the opium farmer's ready reply.

Once again a short pause ensued.

"It is hot to-day!" whispered a voice.

The Resident cast a look at one of his oppassers and the man immediately left the room. A few instants later three or four servants hurried in bearing trays full of glasses in which the deliciously iced champagne was foaming and glittering. The Chinamen eagerly took them—it was so very very hot!

"Sixteen hundred thousand guilders is offered!" cried Mr. van Gulpendam.

At that moment Lim Yang Bing's opponent seized upon two of the glasses and, in his feverish excitement, he gulped down their contents.

"Sixteen hundred and twenty-five!" he cried.

"Seventeen hundred thousand!" retorted the opium farmer with great composure.

Another pause, which was broken only by the heavy breathing of the excited crowd and the clinking of the glasses, which under the able superintendence of Laurentia, who stood behind a side-door watching the scene, were continually being replenished by the waiters.

"Seventeen hundred thousand!" repeated the Resident.

"Seventeen hundred and twenty!" cried Lim Yang Bing's rival.

"Eighteen hundred thousand!" answered the farmer.

Another glass of the seductive beverage was required before a higher bid was made.

"Eighteen hundred and twenty thousand!" at length gasped Kwee Siong Liem huskily, as if he were losing his voice altogether.

"Nineteen hundred thousand!" cried Lim Yang Bing.

His rival was beginning to waver, yet he mustered up courage to mutter in an almost inaudible whisper:

"Nineteen hundred and twenty-five thousand!"

"Two millions!" exclaimed Lim Yang Bing triumphantly.

A dead silence ensued. After that knock-down blow one might have heard a pin drop. It was evident that the opposition was crushed. Perhaps Kwee Siong Liem might have made another attempt; but the members of his company pulled him forcibly back and prevented him from rashly uttering another word.

"Two millions are bid," said the Resident. "Allow me once again to draw the attention of the company to the fact that several additional licenses will be granted."

But it was of no avail. The servants—poor fellows—kept rushing about filling up the glasses; but the wine seemed to have lost its power.

"Two millions once!

"Two millions—twice. Will anyone bid higher? Two millions—for the third time!"

Bang! down came the hammer.

"Subject to the approval of the Dutch Government," said the Resident impressively, "I declare this opium contract to be assigned to Lim Yang Bing!"

At these words all the officials crowded round their chief to wish him joy on his brilliant success; while most of the Chinamen pressed around Lim Yang Bing to congratulate him and shake hands with him.

Laurentia took care that another round of champagne should set the seal on the bargain. There was, of course, a great deal of excitement for some time, and much enthusiasm was displayed; but whether any one present bestowed even a passing thought upon the poor unhappy dessa-people, out of whose scanty means and enfeebled frames this enormous sum was to be wrung—that we cannot undertake to affirm.

Yes, there was one man who did think of them; and that man was van Rheijn.

He looked sadly up at the portrait of the king as he asked himself whether it could really be his royal will that such things should go on among his subjects. Alas, the dumb canvas could not answer, and the picture of the sovereign gazed down quietly upon the noisy crowd.

Scarcely had the Resident got rid of his visitors before he rushed into his study, and soon returned with beaming countenance, bearing in his hand two telegrams, each couched in precisely similar terms.

"Result of opium-sale at Santjoemeh—two millions. Van Gulpendam."

One dispatch was destined for Batavia, the other was for the Hague.

When the oppasser whom he sent to the telegraph office had disappeared, van Gulpendam looked around him with the utmost satisfaction and complacency. As his eye fell upon the Dutch flag, which spread its gay colours to the breeze, he fancied that those folds pointed to the North-West—towards home.

"Aye," he muttered to himself, "from that quarter my reward must come."

Turning round as he said these words, he saw Laurentia standing at his elbow. He gave her one penetrating look:

"You here yet?" asked he.

But without replying, she grasped his arm, drew him with gentle violence into the inner room, and there, when safe from every prying look, she clasped him in her strong white arms to her breast.

"Gulpie!" she cried, "Gulpie, my darling! you have surpassed yourself!"

"Yes," said he, with assumed modesty, "yes, I have piloted that frigate pretty cleverly, though I say so myself. Now, I hope they will not be ungrateful at the Hague!"

CHAPTER XL.

THE "VIRTUS NOBILITAT." ANNA AND DALIMA. A TELEGRAM.

OH no, the people at the Hague were not at all ungrateful. Eight days had not elapsed before the telegraph had flashed across the ocean the news, that it had been the pleasure of H. M. the king to confer upon his trusty servant van Gulpendam the order of the Netherlands' Lion. By the next mail the particulars arrived in Java, and it then became known that immediately after the receipt of the telegram announcing the result of the opium-sale at Santjoemeh, a special council of Ministers was called. At this meeting the Colonial Secretary, elated to the verge of excitement, had drawn special attention to the conspicuous merit of Resident van Gulpendam, and had dwelt upon the great financial advantages which would accrue to the State if all the other residents were encouraged to emulate his example. He reminded his colleagues that the revenue derived from the coffee-culture was fast dwindling away and threatened soon to become a thing of the past; and that, therefore, opium was in the future to be looked upon as the chief means for keeping afloat the ship of the State. That it was for this reason a matter of the utmost importance to strive and raise the revenues, derived from that source, by all possible means, as indeed he had always shown himself zealous to do from the day that the king had entrusted the affairs of the colonies to his hands. Knowing perfectly well that he had nothing new to say, yet the minister purposely left something unsaid. He took care not to tell his colleagues, and the nation, that, with anything like judicious management, the coffee culture would have continued as profitable as ever it was; but that, by gross neglect and swindling on the part of the officials who had the management of it, that source of revenue had been well-nigh destroyed. He further omitted to let them know, that the culture of coffee was a means of spreading prosperity and contentment among the native population; whereas the encouragement of opium was a public disgrace and a national curse.

Upon these subjects the Colonial Secretary did not touch; and thus his colleagues unanimously applauded his speech and supported his application for the Netherlands' Lion, an application to which, being a constitutional monarch, King William III. could not refuse his sanction.

Some few there were, no doubt, who shook their heads dubiously as the news of this honourable distinction reached Santjoemeh. But yet, when the newspapers, in their boldest type, conveyed to the people the happy tidings, almost all Santjoemeh was beside itself for joy. Cards, letters, telegrams of congratulation came pouring in on all sides, not only from Java; but also from friends in Holland.

The van Gulpendams received visits innumerable, and even those who did not join in the universal chorus of rapture, yet found it difficult to refrain from giving some outward show of satisfaction. Such want of courtesy might very easily have been ascribed to envy.

But these were not the only demonstrations of the public joy. Fêtes, dinner parties, balls were given to celebrate the memorable event. The Regent of Santjoemeh led the way by giving a splendid banquet in honour of the newly made knight;

and his example was speedily followed by the Government officials, by the members of the Club "Concorrdia," by the Chinese major, &c. &c.

As a grand final to this round of festivities, a state ball was given at the Residence, at which, it is needless to say, that all Santjoemeh was expected to be present, as indeed it was.

On these festive occasions, toasts were drunk, speeches were made, congratulatory odes were recited—and all this to glorify the man whose breast was now decorated with the "virtus nobilitat." Fair Laurentia, with that fine tact, which, in woman, is almost an instinct, had tried to persuade her husband to appear in public with the very tiniest cross suspended from the narrowest possible bit of blue and orange ribbon. This would undoubtedly have been in good taste; but the Resident would have none of it. He sent at once to Batavia for a cross about as big as an ordinary saucer, and he suspended it from a ribbon of proportionate width. "When you do hang out a flag," said he to his wife, "men must be able to see it a mile off and you must let it blow out bravely." That was his view of the matter, and no argument had been of any avail against this nautical aphorism.

To tell the truth, the man was mighty proud of himself and hugely enjoyed all the fuss that was made about him. His satisfaction would indeed have been perfect, had not certain uneasy rumours begun to spread among the public. It was whispered, that among the native population, the feeling of contentment of which the Resident was constantly making mention in his despatches, was not by any means so perfect as he tried to represent it. Rumours were abroad of secret gatherings and even of conspiracies far more alarming than the casual assembling of robber bands. It was a curious thing that a certain paper in Batavia, alluding to these secret risings in the residence of Santjoemeh, said that a Holy War was in preparation, and gave this information on trustworthy authority. This paper, which had thus ventured to disturb the serenity of the authorities, was treated in the most summary manner, its plant was confiscated, its offices closed, its editor banished; all this to prove, of course, that there was no disturbance whatever, but that the press only was dangerous.

But yet, some very plain hints were conveyed to Resident van Gulpendam that it would be well for him to do his utmost to prove that the situation was really as satisfactory as he represented it to be, and that the unpleasant rumours were nothing more than idle gossip.

Accordingly, van Gulpendam had, during the festive week, made some excursions into the parts which were said to be disaffected; but he had found the most profound quiet everywhere. At the suggestion of the European officials, the native chiefs had not failed to wait on the kandjeng toean to offer him their very sincere congratulations on the distinction with which it had been the king's pleasure to honour him.

Nothing could be better. Van Gulpendam was in the highest possible spirits, he had a kind word for all, he courteously acknowledged every profession of good will, whether it came from European or native; and exhorted every one to continue in these pleasant paths of peace.

But yet, amidst all this chorus of jubilation, one jarring note was heard. It came from a well-known European settler, who owned a large sugar-plantation and factory, situated on the extreme limits of the residence of Santjoemeh. This gentleman was most positive in his assertion, that clandestine meetings and assemblies were, now and then, held in a wood close by his property. He had his information from sources which, he thought, were absolutely trustworthy; and he further declared that he was acquainted even with the names of a couple of the ringleaders. He could not help looking upon these secret meetings as suspicious, even though perhaps they might not be immediately dangerous.

"And may I beg you to tell me what are those names?" said Mr. van Gulpendam sarcastically.

"I know only two of them," was the reply; "they must be father and son, for they are Pak Ardjan and Ardjan; the latter, I am told, is a bold and determined fellow, and both seem to belong to the dessa Kaligaweh in the district of Banjoe Pahit."

At the mention of these names, the Resident felt that he turned pale. He pulled out his handkerchief to wipe the perspiration from his face and to hide his evident confusion.

"It is oppressively hot!" cried he, in a faint tone of voice.

A glass of iced water was handed to him, and soon he regained his composure. Determined to remove the impression which his momentary confusion might have made, he continued:

"Pooh, pooh! Those Kaligaweh fellows have crossed the sea long ago. Depend upon it they wont show their noses on Dutch territory again. I know for a fact that they were quite lately seen at Singapore. There can be no doubt about that."

"Well, Resident," replied the sugar-planter in a serious tone, "I must tell you that I do not feel at all safe. You know, of course, that here in India the outlying settlers always are the first victims of these native plots; and that if such a rising as I apprehend were to break out, all Europeans would be ruthlessly massacred. My grounds," he continued, "lie far away, and, in case of a sudden outbreak, it would take two days at least for either police or military to reach me. I shall therefore esteem it a great favour if you will grant me some kind of protection. Send me a few policemen whom I can trust, I will see to the arming of the men."

"Policemen! my dear sir. What are you talking about? What would be the use of them?" asked the Resident with a compassionate smile; for he had by this time completely regained his self-possession. "You are creating fanciful dangers. It is, in fact, absurd to talk in this manner."

"I know what I know," rejoined the sugar-factor, "and I say without any hesitation, that the reports which have reached me do not appear to me at all fanciful or incredible."

"All right!" said van Gulpendam carelessly.

"You must excuse me, Resident," insisted the sugar-planter, "but I think that if you were living with your family in that lonely spot you would not talk in quite such an easy way."

Although our friend van Gulpendam was not precisely the stuff that heroes are made of, yet he was not by any means a coward. He felt, moreover, perfectly well that the moment had arrived to *payer de sa personne*. What might be said at Batavia should it be suspected that he felt the slightest distrust or fear?

"All nonsense!" cried he in the same sarcastic and careless manner. "Come now, my dear sir, to prove to you how certain I am that there is nothing wrong, I invite myself and my wife to go and stay with you for a fortnight on your plantation. I know you keep a pretty good galley, do you accept my offer?"

"With the greatest pleasure in the world, Resident," eagerly cried the planter.

He felt sure that the Resident of the district would take care to come under a sufficient escort of police.

"Very well, then," replied van Gulpendam; "as soon as ever these festivities are over at Santjoemeh, I will let you know; and then you may get a couple of rooms ready for us."

"And how many oppassers do you intend to bring?"

"None at all! a couple of my servants, and that is all. I intend to show you that I have the fullest confidence in the state of affairs, and that I am under no apprehension whatever. Now that is agreed upon, eh?"

Just outside, close under the verandah in which this conversation was taking place, a couple of sentries were walking up and down as a guard of honour to the kandjeng toean. If any one could but have watched one of these fellows, he must have noticed that the sentry marched up and down in such a manner as always to keep as close as possible to the speakers. He must have observed also, that the man was listening to every word that was said; and that his eyes wore a most dangerous and sinister expression. At the last sentence spoken by the Resident a gleam of satisfaction seemed to overspread the native soldier's face and, had he received a classical education, no doubt the man would have muttered to himself: "*Deus quem vult perdere prius dementat.*"

As soon as van Gulpendam returned to Santjoemeh, he gave it out far and wide that both his wife and himself were tired out by this round of festivities, that they needed rest and had made up their minds to go and enjoy a fortnight's peace and quietness at the factory "Soeka maniesan."

Two days later they started. Laurentia took only her maid, and van Gulpendam a couple of body-servants; but, on the box, a single oppasser was seated beside the coachman. His duty was to hold aloft the golden pajoeng in token that the Resident toean was seated within.

That same day Charles van Nerekool and Theodoor Grenits also started for Gombong, intending from thence, in company with Murowski, to go and surprise Anna van Gulpendam in her lonely retreat. The two carriages crossed as they left the town of Santjoemeh. The one over which the pajoeng was displayed travelling in an eastern direction, while the other took the road to the south.

After nonna Anna and baboe Dalima had been so thoroughly frightened at their bathing place, they no longer ventured to go alone to the spot. They thought—indeed by this time they felt sure—that the stone which so unexpectedly had splashed down by Anna's side, had been detached from the rock above by the tread of some animal—of some wild boar perhaps or some stray goat. But for all that the fright had suggested the possibility of a surprise. Anna, therefore, had persuaded an old Javanese woman to come and take up her abode with them in the little hut. She would accompany them to the bathing place and mount guard while the young girls were disporting themselves in the water, and would thus be able to give them timely warning of the approach of any possible intruder.

There was another advantage gained by taking this nènèh into their service; for they could now leave to her certain necessary and menial duties which would leave them more time to spend at the loom or to work in the painting room. The harder they worked the faster the money came in, for the kahins and the slendangs which they wove, and the sarongs they painted, were in great request. In fact they generally had more orders on hand than they could manage to execute. The result was that the inmates of the hut began to find themselves in somewhat easy circumstances, and—was it perhaps owing to this fact, or was it because no one could look upon the two pretty girls without being attracted by them?—At all events this much is certain that when, on rare occasions, they appeared in the dessa Ajo, where they had no fear of being recognised, the young men of the village would cast many a tender look upon them—sometimes even a kindly word was whispered as they passed.

All this the girls mightily enjoyed, and they had many a hearty laugh over the love-lorn looks of the village swains. One day Dalima merrily said to her young mistress:

"If they only knew that they were casting sheeps' eyes at a resident's daughter, wouldn't they fly back in terror?"

"Hush, Dalima, do not mention such a thing again," said Anna very seriously. "You ought to know that I dislike any such allusions. I am no longer a resident's daughter!"

But, when she perceived that her scolding tone of voice really grieved her companion, she continued with a pleasant smile:

"As if the young men of Ajo ever gave me a look!"

"But, Nana," asked Dalima, "whom do they look at then?"

"They have evidently taken a fancy to one of us," replied Anna, "but it is certainly not to me; I can see that plainly enough. All those smiles and sweet little whispers are for you, Dalima."

"How can you talk such nonsense!" said Dalima half-crossly.

"I am only telling you the truth, Dalima."

"Have you ever noticed Kjahi Wangsa, Nana? He has no eyes but for you."

'No, no, Dalima, for you.'

"No, for you, Nana!"

And so the girls would run on almost daily, and on such occasions it would have been hard to say who had the last word.

One day, as they were thus merrily talking, Anna said to her friend: "What if it were the Kjahi who gave us that fright the other day?"

"What do you mean, Nana?"

"I mean that it might have been that booby watching us."

"There is not the least fear of that," replied Dalima, "he would never have dared to do such a thing. Not one of the young fellows are bold enough for that—he, least of all."

"Not much boldness required for that," laughed Anna, "to play the spy on two young girls!"

"Well, I tell you, he would not have dared to do it. But you need not trouble yourself, there was no one there at all. You know how long we kept looking about and, though we had a view of the path for a long way to the right and left, we saw not a single soul."

"Yet," rejoined Anna, "it seems to me a very mysterious thing."

"If there were anybody there at all," continued Dalima, "it must have been a white man."

"A white man, Dalima!"

"Yes, it is now so long ago that I do not mind telling you all about it. A few days earlier it would only have made you nervous. The evening before we were frightened by the fall of that stone, a white man arrived at Ajo, and passed the night in the loerah's house."

"Dalima!" cried Anna, in dismay, "who was he?"

"I can't tell you, Nana. I have tried hard enough to find out; but I have discovered nothing further than that he busied himself with butterfly catching. Pah!"

We may mention here that the natives of Java are, as a rule, afraid of butterflies. They fancy that the dust from their wings produces violent itching and even leprosy. Hence Dalima's exclamation of disgust.

"Did you see him, Dalima?" continued Anna, "did he see you?"

"Well, no, Nana, I did not. In fact next morning he started before daybreak. The last that was seen of him was at Pringtoetoel, he was then going in an easterly direction."

"Why did you not tell me this at once?" asked Anna.

"Why should I have done so? It would only have disturbed you for nothing. What was the use of troubling you to no purpose?"

For a few moments the girls spoke not a word.

Dalima, who was beginning to fear that Anna was really displeased, at length broke the silence and said:

"You are not angry with me, Nana?"

"Angry? no, Dalima."

"What makes you look so serious then?"

"I wish we could move to some other place," sighed Anna.

"Move? why?" cried Dalima.

"Yes, move away, further into the mountain, where the country is wilder and more lonely. Yonder close by the birds-nest grots. I wish I could retreat into one of those caves!"

"What are you thinking about, Nana?" cried Dalima, growing seriously alarmed at her friend's words.

"Oh, I have some kind of presentiment that Charles is on my track," sighed Anna.

"He ought to have been here before this," remarked the baboe with something very like scorn in her voice. "A Javanese," she continued, "would have found you out long ago."

"How about Ardjan then?" asked Anna.

"Ardjan!" cried Dalima sadly, "Ardjan is a convict, he has run away, Allah only knows where he is and what he is about. Moreover, I am no longer his betrothed. To him I am nothing more than a poor fallen girl!"

Both again were silent for some time, each absorbed in her own thoughts. Anna was sorry that she had touched so sensitive a chord; but it was Dalima who continued:

"But even if it were so, if the young judge really were on your track—"

"Oh! don't speak so," cried Anna, "the very thought fills me with terror. If I could think that possible I would start off at once."

"But what can you have against him?" persisted the baboe.

"No more of this, Dalima!"

"Have you ceased to love him then? Have you cast him out of your heart?"

"Don't speak so!" cried Anna in the greatest excitement; "not love him? Oh! if that were true! Cast him out of my heart! Not a day, not an hour, not a minute passes without my thinking of him!"

"Well then," continued the simple Javanese girl, "why be so cruel?"

"Be silent, Dalima!"

"Can you not feel how wretched you are making him, Nana?"

"Oh! I pray you, pray do not say another word. Never, never can I be his—no—nor any other man's wife."

Dalima looked up at her with a puzzled expression. It would not be easy perhaps to say exactly what was passing in her mind. On her face there was a look of astonishment mingled with vexation; in her eyes one might read:

"What funny whims those white folk have! How miserable they make their lives!"

After a little while she was about to renew the conversation, she was in the act of opening her mouth to do so, when, just at that moment, the nènèh entered the gallery where the two girls were sitting. She had been down to the dessa to make some purchases, and now came in to give an account of what she had bought and of the money she had spent. Her entry created a diversion; but, when the old woman began to open her budget of news, she caused the greatest consternation. She told the girls that three Europeans had arrived at the dessa and had taken up their quarters in the loerah's house.

"Three Europeans?" cried Anna, pale with terror.

"Yes, Nana," replied the nènèh, who, thinking that she was speaking to a countrywoman of her own, always followed Dalima's example and addressed the Resident's daughter as "Nana."

"Did you see them, nèh?" asked Dalima.

"No," said the old woman.

"Could you find out what business they have in the village?"

"Some say one thing, some another," was the reply. "I have heard it said that they are railway people who are out on a shooting expedition. I think it very likely, for they have guns with them. Another man told me they are after snakes. Well they can catch enough of them here. As I was coming along just now I saw a deadly snake. Luckily I caught sight of the beast or else I might have trodden on it, and then it would have been all up with me. A third report is that the gentlemen have come to visit the birds-nest caves."

"Did you hear anything else?"

"No, Nana; but why do you look so strange? There is nothing whatever to be frightened at—those white men never hurt anybody. Look—there they are—coming up the path!"

Anna gave one look in the direction to which the nènèh pointed. She uttered a shriek and catching up a slendang which she flung over her head she rushed from the house. Dalima, who also had recognised van Nerekool among the party, followed her mistress and both flew as fast as their feet would carry them up the pathway which ran in the opposite direction to the south of the Poleng range. The three men could see two female forms leaving the hut and rushing up the slope over against them.

"There she goes!" exclaimed Murowski.

"Anna! Anna!" cried van Nerekool in heartrending accents; but it was in vain. That moment the two girls disappeared in a sudden bend of the mountain path.

And now, before coming to the closing scene of our story, we must here cast another look backward.

Van Nerekool and Grenits had started, as we heard just now, in a carriage from Santjoemeh on their way to Wonosobo. From thence they had pursued their journey on horseback.

They had no time, they had no inclination, to admire the beauty of the sublime scenery through which they passed. Whenever Grenits tried to rouse his companion and awaken in him some interest in the glories that surrounded them, the latter might cast a furtive glance around, but it was only to cry immediately after:

"Let us get on, Theodoor, let us get on!"

Before setting out on their journey, they had telegraphed to Murowski, and they found that medical officer quite ready to accompany them. His colleague was still staying at Gombong and our Pole therefore found but little difficulty in getting his leave of absence prolonged for four or five days.

The travellers, however, did not arrive at Gombong until pretty late in the day. They were tired out with their long ride and felt that they must put off further operations to the morrow. Of that compulsory delay they made the best use they could by calling upon the commandant of the place to pay their respects to him.

"If you three are going on the campaign!" exclaimed the kind-hearted soldier, "I advise the butterflies and the beetles to keep a pretty sharp look-out. There will be slaughter on the hills to-morrow. I hope you have a good supply of corks and pins for the poor prisoners. However, I wish you success."

But while they sat chatting with the commandant and with his wife and enjoying a cool glass of beer in the verandah, a servant brought in a telegram. It was addressed to Murowski. He took it from the man.

"Will you allow me?" said he, looking towards the lady of the house.

"Of course, of course," said she, "no ceremony required for telegrams. Open it at once; perhaps it is about some patient. I only hope it will not interfere with your expedition."

Murowski tore open the envelope and glanced at the signature.

"It is from van Rheijn," said he to his friends— "Great God!" he continued, "what have we here?"

"What is the matter? What is it?" exclaimed all in a breath.

"Tell van Nerekool," he read, "that Resident van Gulpendam and his wife have been murdered by a band of ketjoes. Further particulars by letter!"

For some seconds all present sat dumb with amazement and horror. Then van Nerekool sprang to his feet, he snatched the telegram from Murowski's hand, and held it up to the light of the lamp. He rubbed his eyes as if he could not trust his senses:

"Aye!" he exclaimed at length—"true, too true!"

"Is Mr. van Nerekool related to those poor people?" asked the captain's wife, who was struck by the ghastly pallor of the young judge's face.

"Pardon me, madam," said Grenits, "we happened to leave Santjoemeh at the same time as the family van Gulpendam. The mere thought of so terrible a murder perpetrated on friends, whom we but lately left in the full glow of health and spirits, fills us with horror."

The lady nodded assent. "It is indeed terrible!" she murmured.

"My friends," said van Nerekool, turning to Murowski and Grenits, "I fear our expedition will have to be deferred for a few hours. Under these terrible circumstances I feel it my duty to go at once and see Mrs. Steenvlak. How far is it from here to Karang Anjer, captain?"

"About six pals, Mr. van Nerekool," replied the soldier.

"Is it as much as that? Could you manage to get me a horse?"

"My own horse is at your disposal," said the captain. "What do you intend to do?"

"I must at once ride off to Karang Anjer. It is now about seven o'clock. Before eight I can be there. To-morrow morning before daybreak I shall be off again, and at six I hope to be back here to resume our journey to Karang Bollong. You need not fear, captain, I shall see that your horse is well cared for."

"I am not at all afraid of that," replied the captain. "He will find an excellent stable at the Steenvlaks." Then he rose and went to give the necessary orders to get the horse saddled.

"Miss van Gulpendam was staying with the Steenvlaks—" said the lady of the house, her curiosity thoroughly aroused at this sudden resolution on the part of van Nerekool.

"You are right, madam," replied Murowski. "You see it is very probable that Mr. Steenvlak may know where the young lady is to be found, and we might then break the sad news gently to her."

Meanwhile Grenits had been asking van Nerekool what he intended to do.

"She cannot now refuse to give me a few words to Anna," was his reply. "In such terrible circumstances a true friend's advice may be of the greatest value. Do you not approve of my plan?"

Theodoor merely nodded assent while he warmly pressed his friend's hand.

Ten minutes later van Nerekool was in the saddle and was galloping along the road to Karang Anjer. When he arrived there he found the Steenvlaks had already been informed of the terrible event; for the Assistant Resident also had received a telegram from Santjoemeh.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE OUTLAWS AT SOEKA MANIESAN. FEARFUL RETRIBUTION.

YES! the terrible news was true—it was but too true—!

When the van Gulpendams arrived at Soeka maniesan, the proprietor of that sugar-factory could not help admitting that lately all symptoms of disturbance had disappeared. He

had caused the woods, in which the supposed seditious meetings were held, to be carefully watched; but he had not been able to discover in them a single human being. Thus, he had come to the conclusion, that either his former information had been altogether false, or else that the mutinous spirits had removed to some other part of the country.

Resident van Gulpendam, on his arrival, summoned the Assistant Resident of the district of which Soeka maniesan was an outlying station, and he also called before him the Regent and the Wedonos of the place; but he could not extract anything out of them which might awaken so much as a suspicion of danger.

Very much the other way! All these authorities declared that the most profound calm and content prevailed throughout the district, though the Regent was fain to admit that there was a great deal of poverty and distress about.

"Indeed!" said the Resident; "and what may be the cause of this sad state of things, Radhen Adipattie?"

The Javanese chief shook his head dubiously, he did not at all like answering that question.

As he stood there hesitating, van Gulpendam asked:

"Do the landowners pay the labourers reasonably well?"

"Oh, yes, kandjeng toean."

"Perhaps the rice harvest has failed or has not, this season, produced as much as usual?"

"No, no, kandjeng toean, the harvest has been especially good and abundant this year. The men have brought home many bundles of rice to the common barn."

"What then may be the cause of the distress you speak of, Radhen Adipattie?" asked the Resident.

"I do not know," replied the Javanese chief with a sigh.

The truth was, that he knew it well enough; but that he did not dare to speak out. He knew equally well that if he told the whole truth he would incur the displeasure of the Resident. He knew that the barns were empty. The harvest had been plentiful indeed; but very little of the crop had found its way to the barns.

The fact is, that the Javanese is a mere grown-up child. He had simply squandered away his produce while it was yet standing unripe in the fields. To lay his hands upon a little ready cash, he had sold his rice, long before it was cut, to the Chinese money-lenders. And the money thus obtained, at a ruinous sacrifice of course, had speedily found its way to the opium-den, to the gambling-booth and to the pawn-shop. It had been swallowed up by that august Trinity which is the chief source of Dutch revenue. No, no! the Regent was too prudent a man to put his thoughts into words, he cast a look of awe upon the big cross which glittered on the Resident's breast and, with another sigh, he said again:

"I cannot tell, kandjeng toean."

The Resident was perfectly satisfied with the result of his investigation, and declared that he would occupy no other rooms than those in the outbuildings. He professed himself quite contented with the ordinary visitors' quarters.

"But, Resident," persisted the proprietor, "your apartments in the house are all ready for you."

"My worthy friend," said van Gulpendam, "I won't hear of any such thing. I intend to prove to you that I am perfectly satisfied as to the state of the country, and, in the out-buildings I shall sleep as securely and as soundly as you in your house."

From this resolution no arguments could move him. And, indeed, it seemed that he was perfectly right. The reports which came in from all quarters were so reassuring, that the owner of the factory Soeka maniesan himself was beginning to incline to the opinion that he must have been deceived.

The first night which the Resident and his wife passed in their apartments, was as quiet as any night could possibly be, and they enjoyed the most delightful rest.

The next day was spent in a minute survey of the sugar-factory although it was rather late in the season, and the yearly campaign was about to close. In the afternoon they took a pleasant walk, in the course of which both Mr. and Mrs. van Gulpendam were delighted at the very great respect which was paid them by every class of natives they happened to meet. Not that such homage was strange to them, quite the contrary; for, while he was only a controller, van Gulpendam had exacted that every native whom he encountered on the way should squat down and make a respectful sembah, and that every woman should turn away her face, which is the usual way of showing deference. But here, all these things were done by the natives with such evident signs of deep humility—the country people were evidently so overawed at the sight of their august visitors—that both the Resident and Laurentia were delighted at so much submission. No, no, in these parts there could be not the smallest ground for apprehension; van Gulpendam thought he knew quite enough of the native character to make sure of that. The evening also was passed most pleasantly. The owner of Soeka maniesan had invited the principal families of the neighbourhood to meet the Resident; and these had, of course, eagerly, accepted the invitation. The gentlemen, and some of the ladies too, sat down to a quiet game at cards, and those who did not play, passed the time pleasantly enough with music and social conversation.

If some remnants of uneasiness could yet have lingered in the Resident's mind, the placid landscape which lay stretched out before him must have dissipated all such vague apprehensions. The moon stood high in the heavens and shed her calm quiet light over the scene. A cool breeze was rustling in the leaves of the splendid trees by which the entire building was surrounded. In fact, everything breathed the most profound peace, that serene quiet which makes tropical nights above all things delicious. Thus the evening passed in quiet enjoyment, and the hour of midnight had struck before the carriages came rumbling up to take the visitors home.

When the guests had taken their departure, and the inmates of the house were preparing to retire to rest, one of the overseers came in and reported that some fellow had been seen sneaking about behind the garden hedge.

"Some thief, probably," said the man carelessly, as if such a thing was a not at all unusual occurrence.

"Come," said the proprietor, "let us go and have a look round." As he said these words, he took down his gun, and offered the Resident a weapon of the same description. Van Gulpendam however, with a wave of his hand, declined to take it.

The two gentlemen, accompanied by the overseer, walked out into the grounds; while the ladies retired to their bedrooms.

As we have already said, the weather was beautifully warm and clear.

The two European gentlemen strolled about but could discover nothing to breed suspicion. The cool night-air induced them somewhat to extend their walk. They got outside the grounds and entered the fields of sugar-cane which adjoined the property, in which the canes had already been partially gathered. The cane which had been cut had been carried away to the factory; but a considerable part of the field was still occupied by the tall stems awaiting the hand of the reaper. Here and there in the field were big heaps of dry leaves which had been stripped from the cane and were destined presently to be carried to the factory to serve as fuel. The proprietor of Soeka maniesan was a thoroughly practical sugar manufacturer, a man who knew all the ins and outs of his trade; and Mr. van Gulpendam, who, while he occupied inferior positions in the interior of the island, had been brought much into contact with that industry, prided himself upon being pretty well up in the subject also. Thus between these two experts, the conversation never once flagged. Followed at a respectful distance by the overseer, the gentlemen strolled leisurely along discussing the various kinds of cane which were grown on the plantation. Van Gulpendam would have it, that the light yellow cane contained the greatest amount of saccharine matter, while the other declared, quite as positively, that his long experience had taught him that the dark brown cane was the more profitable to grow.

Both gentlemen stuck to their opinion, and the discussion was growing somewhat lively; when—suddenly—a yell was heard, and a number of men with blackened faces and armed with clubs, sprang up from behind one of the heaps of leaves and made a rush straight at the two Europeans. Startled at this sudden apparition, the Resident and his host took to flight; but they had time to run only a very few paces, before the nimble-footed Javanese had caught up the proprietor of the factory and felled him to the ground with a single blow, before he could so much as get his gun up to his shoulder. The Resident they did not overtake until he had got within the grounds; but, instead of striking at him, the men seized him, flung him down to the ground and securely bound him. What had meanwhile become of the overseer was a mystery. Very likely he had thrown himself down and was crouching behind a heap of leaves; or, perhaps, he was hiding behind some bushes. As van Gulpendam was being bound, he could see a dozen of the men rushing off in the direction of the wing in which was situated his wife's bedroom. He would have cried out for help; but a powerful hand drove into his mouth a gag made of an old rag and prevented him from uttering a sound. He could see that the attacking party first attempted to open the door; but, finding it locked and fast bolted, dashed it from its hinges with their clubs. Then the whole party rushed in and cries of terror arose from the interior—then, suddenly, came one terrible shriek of agony—and all was still again—.

This had taken place so rapidly, that the din made by the battering in of the door only startled some inmates of the house and the men who, during the night, had to attend to the steam-engines in the factory. Long before anyone could come to the rescue, the attacking party had returned to their comrades, who mounted guard over van Gulpendam. Then, one of them without attempting to disguise his voice, said:

"Come, make haste, let us get along, the horses are waiting for us in the cane-field."

"Is the lady dead?" asked one of the men as coolly as possible.

"Dead!" was the reply, in a voice which trembled with revengeful passion.

"Come, pick up that white pig, or else all the factory men will be upon us and I shall have to kris the dog; that would be a pity."

At the words, a couple of bamboo poles were thrust under the arms and legs of poor van Gulpendam.

"I am the kandjeng toean Resident!" he tried to say. Whether the words were understood or not is doubtful; but the only result of the effort was a furious blow in the mouth which drove the foul gag further home.

"March!" said the leader. Four Javanese thereupon took up the bamboo poles on their shoulders and trotted off with their burden. The sufferer groaned with the intense pain caused by the jolting; but his lamentations were not heard, or if they were, no one paid the slightest heed to his distress. Close outside the factory grounds stood half-a-dozen horses saddled and all ready to start. Upon one of these van Gulpendam was tightly strapped, then some of the men mounted the other animals and the troop was ready to move on.

"To the 'djaga monjet!'" cried one of the horsemen to those whom he left behind.

"Yes, yes!" eagerly cried the others.

As soon as the mounted men had disappeared with their prisoner, the party which was left behind set fire to the sugar-canes. The reedy stems burned fiercely and soon the dreadful roar of the flames was mingled with the sharp crackling of the canes. Under cover of these flames and of the smoke, the party were enabled to make good their escape; and it was not until then that the big gong of the factory began to sound the alarm.

While this seizure was taking place at Soeka maniesan, another surprise of the same kind was being carried out with equal success in another quarter.

About six pals from the town of Santjoemeh there stood a quaint looking building, hidden away very pleasantly amid charming scenery in the bends of the rising ground. Had the house been built in anything like Swiss or Italian style, it might have been called a chalet or a villa; but the order of its architecture was so distinctly Mongolian that no mistake could be made as to its origin. It was, in fact, a Chinese pavilion which lately had become the property of Lim Ho the son of the opium factor at Santjoemeh. If anyone had fondly hoped that, after his marriage, our babah would have settled down and become somewhat less irregular in his habits, a single peep into the interior of that pavilion must have dispersed all such pleasant illusions. That small building, situated there in so charming and lonely a spot was, in fact, nothing else than a trap into which the licentious young Chinaman was wont to decoy the victims of his lust and was enabled to ensure their ruin. The apartments of the pavilion were all furnished regardless of cost and in the most sumptuous Asiatic style. In every room there were luxurious divans and on every wall hung pictures which might be valuable, perhaps, as works of art, but the subjects of which were sensual and immoral to the lowest degree. On that same night in which the attack was made upon Soeka maniesan, that Chinese pavilion also was surprised. Here the attempt succeeded even more easily than that on the sugar plantation. Lim Ho had that evening left his house in Santjoemeh and was sitting in his pavilion impatiently awaiting for some poor creature who had aroused his passions, and whom his agents had promised to bring him. He had with him only two Chinese servants, fellows who neither would nor could offer the faintest resistance. About midnight, a knock was heard at the door. It was a low faint knock, and the babah, in a fever of expectation, and thinking it was the pigeon which had been decoyed to his den, gave the word at once to open the door.

No sooner, however, had the bolts been drawn and the key turned in the lock, than half-a-dozen men with blackened faces and armed to the teeth sprang in. Lim Ho, true to the cowardly nature of his race, turned pale as death but never for an instant thought of resistance. He glanced round nervously to see whether any way of escape lay open to him; but when he saw both doors occupied and guarded by the attacking party, he tried, in his unmanly terror, to hide himself by creeping under one of the divans. In a very few minutes, however,

he was dragged out of that hiding place and was securely bound, strapped to a horse and carried off.

Here again, just as at Soeka maniesan, the attacking party left everything untouched. They did not lay a finger on any of the articles of value which lay scattered about; but they confined themselves strictly to the murder of Mrs. van Gulpendam and to the capture of the Resident and of the opium farmer's son.

The proprietor of the sugar factory had, it is true, been knocked down by a blow of one of their clubs; but that blow had not been struck wantonly. It was inflicted simply as a precaution and in self-defence; for the man would undoubtedly have run off and spread the alarm. He would have roused his factory hands and caused the whole plot to fail, and he would immediately have started in pursuit of the raiders. That had to be guarded against at all hazards. But the blow did not prove deadly or even dangerous. As soon as the first excitement, consequent upon the discovery of Laurentia's murder, had somewhat subsided, a band of men had sallied forth to put out the fire in the fields, and then the owner of the factory was discovered lying insensible just outside his own grounds. At first they thought he was dead; for he was quite unconscious. They carried him into the house, and then his wife soon found out that her husband, though stunned by a severe blow, was neither wounded nor materially injured. Every effort was made to restore him, and after some time, he recovered his senses. The day had dawned before the police had arrived at Soeka maniesan and began to make their inquiries. There and then a careful examination was held of the entire staff employed on the factory—every single individual being submitted to a rigorous interrogatory; but no clue was found which could lead to the detection of the perpetrators of this daring outrage. Just outside the yet smouldering cane-fields, were found the tracks of horses; but that led to no result for the weather had for a long time been very dry and the morning breeze had covered all further tracks with a thick layer of fine dust. Thus there was nothing, absolutely nothing, to indicate the direction the horsemen might have taken. The proprietor himself, poor fellow, could not give the slightest information. All he knew was that, as he was quietly walking about engaged in argument with the Resident, a number of fellows with blackened faces had started up from behind one of the tall piles of leaves, that he had attempted to run away, but had been overtaken and had received a blow on the head which stunned him. Of what had taken place after that he, of course, knew nothing whatever. The overseer's story was, if possible, still more unsatisfactory. He said that the instant he saw the threatening forms appearing from behind the heap of dadoe, he had flung himself down flat upon the ground and then crept under another heap of leaves; and that he had not ventured to stir out of that hiding place until he heard the crackling of the canes and began to fear that the leaves which covered him might be attacked by the flames. While in this state of terror and suspense, he had seen nothing and had heard nothing. Now, the question was: where were they to look for Resident van Gulpendam? The police were at their wits' end. The whole district of Santjoemeh was, naturally enough, in the greatest excitement; and universal horror prevailed at the terrible fate which, in all probability, had overtaken the chief of the district. But do what they could, and search where they would, not a trace of the criminals could be discovered, not a single gleam of light could be cast upon the impenetrable mystery. For a day or two this state of suspense endured until a fisherman, as he was trying to get his boat into the Moeara Tjatjing, caught sight of the naked body of a European floating just outside the surf. He made for it and drew it into his boat and then took it to the loerah of Kaligaweh which was the nearest dessa.

Had this simple Javanese fisherman only known that it was the body of the kandjeng toean, he would no doubt have turned away his head and quietly said to his mates: "Let Allah's justice float by undisturbed."

Had he been able to foresee what troubles he was bringing upon himself by raising that corpse from its watery grave, he would have taken good care not to touch it. The alligators would, no doubt, soon enough have provided for its burial.

As it was, the loerah of the dessa began by locking up the poor fellow. Then he had to submit to endless examinations by the wedono, by the pattih, by the regent, by the controller, by the assistant resident, by the public prosecutor. All these authorities were most eager in the matter; and thought that, in this poor man, they held in their hands a clue to the mysterious drama enacted at Soekan maniesan. Thus they vied with one another in badgering the poor devil, until they drove him to desperation, and he at length was forced to declare that he was light-headed and of weak intellect.

The body was readily identified as that of Resident van Gulpendam. There could be no doubt about that; for the features were almost intact. But all the parts which the sea-monsters had spared appeared extremely inflamed and swollen; and it was evident that the unhappy man must have died under an extremity of torture, though there was nothing to show that any knife or sharp instrument had caused his death.

What then had been his fate?

"To the 'djaga monjet!'"

Yes! It was indeed to that very same dismal hut in the mangrove swamp by the Moeara Tjatjing, to which we introduced our readers in our first chapters, that the band of horsemen was now riding at full speed.

They carefully avoided all the dessas which lay on the road, a thing which they could easily do as they were perfectly acquainted with all the bye-paths. They shunned even the guard-houses, not being certain that the watchmen stationed there could be implicitly trusted. Thus, without let or hindrance, the little troop rode on, and the day was just beginning to break when they reached the mangrove wood, in which the "djaga monjet" was situated.

When they carried van Gulpendam, still bound hand and foot, into the hut, they found Lim Ho there. He had been brought in some time before, and was lying stretched out at full length upon the wretched flooring. He also was bound so tightly that he could not move hand or foot. At a signal from a tall, slim Javanese, who appeared to be the leader of the band, the cords which bound the unhappy prisoners were loosened, and the gags were removed from their mouths.

Around them stood about twenty Javanese, all unrecognisable, with blackened faces and fully armed.

The Chinaman uttered not a word, he seemed prostrate with terror. The sudden shock appeared to have annihilated him.

But, as soon as the European felt that he was free, he stretched his limbs, and in a voice of conscious dignity he said:

"Are you aware that I am the kandjeng toean Resident?"

"Yes, kandjeng toean," replied the leader in a tone of mock humility.

"It is but a few days ago," continued van Gulpendam, "that the kandjeng toean Radja honoured me with a particular mark of his high favour." As he spoke these words he pointed haughtily to the huge cross which still was hanging sparkling on the breast of his light-blue resident's frock.

"Yes, kangjeng toean!" repeated the leader, while all his men made the sembah in token of deep respect.

"Government will exact the most terrible punishment should you hurt so much as a hair of my head!"

A mocking laugh was the answer to that speech. Twenty men grasped the handles of their krises; but at a wave from the leader's hand, all kept silence, and not a single word was spoken, not a single blade was drawn.

"Before Government will be able to punish," rejoined the Javanese quietly, "you will both be dead men."

"Dead!" exclaimed Lim Ho in a voice husky with terror.

"Dead?" cried van Gulpendam. "No, no, you dare not do that! My death would be too fearfully avenged!"

"Both of you, I said—" resumed the leader with perfect coolness, "I said both of you deserve to die. We have passed sentence upon you. That sentence must be carried out—after that, they may do with us what they will—I mean, of course, if they can lay hands upon us."

"But," cried Lim Ho, half mad with terror, "what have I done?"

"You ask me what you have done? Well, I will tell you. In this very hut, you inflicted upon a man, whose only fault was that he loved, and intended to marry, a girl upon whom you had cast your lustful eyes, the most atrocious torture. You ask what you have done? That same young girl you contrived, with the assistance of the njonja of yonder wretch, to get into your possession, you outraged her most brutally, and then, when you had worked your foul will upon her, you cast her off and accused her of opium smuggling."

Lim Ho's face grew ashy-pale as he heard these terrible words, he began to understand into whose hands he had fallen.

Van Gulpendam thought that he ought still to keep up his proud and dignified bearing. He could not bring himself to believe that a mere Javanese would dare to raise his hand against his august person, against the kandjeng toean. But yet he thought it advisable to speak in a somewhat conciliatory tone.

"If what you have just now said be true," he began, "then certainly Lim Ho deserves severe punishment, and I pledge you my word that I will exert my authority to see that his punishment shall be proportioned to his offence; but what have I done that you dare to treat me thus?"

"You, you, kandjeng toean!" vehemently broke in the leader, in a voice which seemed fairly to hiss with rage, "you have made the offences, as you call them, of this Chinese dog possible. You have had the man, of whom I just now spoke, cast into a dungeon, you condemned him to the most barbarous punishment, knowing all the while that he was innocent. And all this you have done merely in order that you might screen the smuggling trade of that scoundrel. You supplied the opium-farmer with the means of preventing that girl's father from defending his own child against the brutality of yon beastly Chinaman. Do you still ask me what you have done? Why, you and your wife are guilty of all I have said—and you and your wife deserve to die. Part of our sentence has already been carried out, and, believe me, it will be fully executed."

"Wha—! What? Partly carried out you said?" gasped van Gulpendam. "My wife—!"

The leader turned to one of his followers:

"Tell the kandjeng toean what has become of the njonja."

"The njonja is dead!" was the brief reply.

"Yes!" shouted the leader wildly, "the njonja is dead! We had mercy upon her, one single stab put an end to her accursed life. Look here—those spots on my kris—they are her blood!"

"That shriek I heard?" cried van Gulpendam.

"Was the last sound she will ever utter in this world. But," continued the Javanese, still carried away by his passion, "do not for a moment flatter yourself that we will deal thus mercifully with you. Upon a woman we could have compassion. But you! Oh yes, you shall suffer! You shall feel something of the tortures you are so ready to inflict upon others!"

Even then van Gulpendam retained something of his fortitude and haughty bearing, and he said:

"I bid you beware of the punishing hand of the Dutch Government, it will know how to avenge me."

"I am prepared to brave any peril, if only I have my revenge," said the Javanese. "Upon you I am determined to execute justice!"

"Justice, justice!" cried van Gulpendam, "and who are you that you dare to prate about justice, even while you are planning sedition and preparing for murder? Tell me who are you?"

"Who I am? Well, you shall know!"

In a corner of that wretched cabin stood a tub filled with water. The Javanese took up the cocoa-nut scoop which hung by it and washed his face.

"Now do you recognise me?" he cried, as he drew himself up to his full height before his prisoners.

"Ardjan!" sighed Lim Ho.

"Ardjan!" cried van Gulpendam as thoroughly dismayed as was his companion in misfortune.

Both of them now plainly saw that they were reserved for some dreadful death. The account which each had to settle with that young man was a heavy one indeed.

"Have mercy! Have mercy upon us!" they cried as they fell down on their knees before him, their teeth chattering with terror as they knelt at his feet.

"Mercy?" almost shrieked Ardjan. "What mercy did you show poor Dalima and old Setrosmito? Come, speak up, will you? What mercy did you show to me and to my old father? Dalima violated! My father and I locked up for months in a loathsome prison, and then, sentenced—by your very mouth—to years of penal servitude— And now you ask me to have mercy? If I could feel pity then indeed you might call me the veriest blockhead in the world. But," continued the Javanese, after a moment's pause, "tell me, supposing I could feel pity, supposing I were to set you free, tell me, kandjeng toean, what would you do then?"

These words were spoken in a much milder tone, it seemed as if Ardjan were wavering, and, in that hesitation, the unfortunate European thought he could see a faint gleam of hope. Trembling with fear, he raised himself on his knees, and, wringing his hands in agony, he cried, while big tears went coursing down his cheeks:

"Oh, do not fear. You shall have full pardon—free pardon—I have power with the Government and I can induce them to forgive all. The great lord at Batavia will grant me my request. All the injustice which has been done shall be amply made good. You shall have compensation—I will see to it. I will pay it out of my own purse—! All that has happened shall be made good, believe me!"

"Dalima's injuries also?" asked a hoarse croaking voice from behind Ardjan. "Those white fellows seem to think they are almighty, or else they fancy that we Javanese are the greatest fools in the world!"

That name of Dalima and these few scornful words seemed to rouse Ardjan out of the fit of weakness which appeared for a moment to have come over him. He shook his head violently as if he wished to drive out some unwelcome thoughts, at that movement his head-cloth became loosened and his long black hair streamed fiercely and wildly over his shoulders.

"No! no!" he exclaimed, "no pity, no mercy. Now I have you in my power, you are crawling and cringing at my feet as mean and as cowardly as the vilest beasts. Did you ever see a Javanese so degrade himself? Did you ever see a native act so meanly, even when pleading for his life? You have sent plenty of them to the gallows, and you ought to know how a coloured man can die. Pity! mercy! Ha! ha! ha! You are ready enough now with your promises; but in your hearts you are, even now, scheming how you may evade them and break them. Trust a white man's word!—ha! ha! ha! As if we don't know all about that. Whenever did a white man keep his promise to us Javanese? Whenever—"

Here one of the men whispered something into Ardjan's ear.

"Yes, yes, you are right, let us cut it short. No, no—no pity, far from it. You shall have a painful, a cruel death. I had made up my mind to give you the most terrible—the 'hoekoem madoe—'"

Lim Ho uttered a fearful yell at these terrible words.

"Mercy! mercy!" he moaned.

"—But that would take too much time," continued Ardjan, who had by this time regained his composure. "We might get the police upon us before you were quite finished and that would spoil the game— No, I have given up that idea. You shall undergo the 'hoekoem kamadoog.' The same punishment, you remember, Lim Ho, that you gave me; and yet I had committed no fault whatever, and the kandjeng toean there thought it right to leave your outrageous crime unpunished. No, you must not be able to say that I am more barbarous than you."

"Mercy! Mercy!" cried both the wretched men.

"No! no! no pity!" rejoined Ardjan.

Then, with a signal to one of his mates, he continued:

"Strip them and take them outside!"

That order was carried out literally and in a very few minutes. The fine light-blue coat was rent from the Resident's back, his trousers followed and his shirt; and torn to ribbons they soon lay on the dirty floor of the cabin—even the *Virtus nobilitat* was trampled under foot.

Lim Ho underwent the same rough operation, and then both men stood there naked before their pitiless judges. Then their hands were tied behind their backs and the wretched creatures were simply pitched down the rude steps.

Ardjan reminded Lim Ho of the glorious fun he had eight months ago when the two Chinamen and himself were similarly treated.

“You remember,” he laughed, “how Than Khan and Liem King tumbled down from top to bottom? It was fine sport to you then!”

It took but a few moments to tie up the two victims to the Niboeng-palms, which grew in front of the hut—to the very trees to which the two Chinamen and Ardjan himself had been fastened.

“The kandjeng toean to that tree,” said Ardjan, pointing to the stem at which he had himself suffered.

“Pardon! Pity!” the poor victims kept crying incessantly.

No one heeded their agonising yells. When they were tied up—Ardjan gave the word: “Now, my lads, give way!”

Four men stepped forward each armed with a bunch of the formidable nettle, and the blows began to fall like rain upon the bare limbs of the wretched victims.

Wherever the leaves fell the flesh seemed to shrink away in agony.

The Chinaman bit his under-lip until the teeth met in the flesh, but he did not utter a single moan. At first van Gulpendam strove to follow his example; but he had not the tough resolution of an Asiatic in this supreme moment. He could not restrain himself. First he moaned, then he whimpered, he cried aloud in his misery, he howled, he yelled with pain. Nothing could touch his ruthless executioners. “Pardon! mercy!” he cried. “Oh, I beg for mercy!”

But, in reply to his piteous cries, came the words:

“Dalima! Ardjan! Pak Ardjan! Setrosmito!” And then upon the brain of the unhappy Resident there flashed another name, a name more terrible to him perhaps than all the others:

“Meidema, Meidema! pardon, mercy!” he kept on wailing in a voice which told of the most exquisite torture.

But gradually his cries grew weaker, at length they became hardly intelligible—they gurgled like a hoarse and dying rattle in the throat. The pain was beyond endurance. Still the men kept plying their deadly nettle.

At length his head began to dangle helplessly, and it seemed as if the unfortunate sufferer had lost consciousness.

Lim Ho had been fortunate enough to reach that state much earlier, and was thus sooner out of his misery.

Ardjan stood by at the scene, glaring at his victims with revengeful eagerness. He clenched his fists convulsively, he had to exercise the greatest self-control to prevent himself from catching up one of the bunches of kamadoog leaves and having his blow at the wretched beings who had not scrupled to inflict the same barbarous treatment upon himself. No, no, he felt not the smallest grain of pity—he could think only of his own wrongs and his own happiness destroyed for ever. Even if the voice of pity could have spoken within him it would have been stifled by his father, who, standing close behind him, kept on whispering in his ear: “Dalima, Dalima!”

For some time the two victims had been unconscious; but yet Ardjan did not think of putting a stop to the torture. At every blow, at every touch even of those terrible leaves the skin of the sufferers puckered up though the bodies no longer felt the pain. The muscles stretched, then ran up into knots and horrid spasms shot through the entire frames. Soon the bodies could no longer support themselves, but hung in the cords that bound them, limp as empty sacks. The eyes of the tortured men were closed; but every now and then they would spasmodically open for a moment, and would stare with a blood-shot stony gaze which betrayed the extreme suffering which even the senseless body was undergoing.

In their dying agonies they flung their heads convulsively to and fro, dashing them up fearfully against the Niboeng palm while flecks of foam came flying from their lips. But, in this world everything must come to an end, and at length the protracted sufferings were over.

Gradually the convulsive starts of the two bodies began to subside and finally ceased altogether. The soul had left its earthly tenement. Then Ardjan, in tones the most indifferent in the world, said, “Enough!”

At the word, his men looked at him for further instructions. “Untie them,” he said, and without speaking another word, he pointed to the sea.

The instant the ropes were cut through, the bodies fell with a heavy thud to the ground. As he fell van Gulpendam for the last time opened his eyes and, very softly, but quite intelligibly he sighed forth the single word:

"Meidema!"

The thought of that unhappy family—of those good honest people whose ruin he had so craftily and cruelly planned, haunted that guilty soul even as it was taking its flight. With that name on his lips he expired.

Lim Ho gave no sign of life.

Both corpses were then dragged to the Kali Tjatjing and pitched into the water, and the stream quickly carried them out to the Java sea.

In the far distance between the two headlands could be seen the schooner brig Kiem Ping Hin quietly riding at anchor and flying the British ensign. Faithful to her calling she was waiting for an opportunity to deliver her smuggled goods to the company Lim Yang Bing.

CHAPTER XLII.

IN THE GOEWAH TEMON. CONCLUSION.

"ANNA, Anna!" cried van Nerekool, and in that cry he cast his whole soul; but it was uttered in vain; for just then a sharp bend in the path caused the two girls to disappear behind a great mass of rock.

When Charles, Murowski and Grenits reached the spot where they had caught this last glimpse of the fugitives, not a trace could be discovered of either of them.

"Anna, Anna!" shouted Charles again and again at the top of his voice; but a beautifully distinct echo, reverberating from the opposite hills, seemed only to mock his cries.

Our three friends, however, were now compelled to pause. They felt that they could go on no longer, and must stop awhile to regain breath. The exertion, indeed, had been very great; for that little path kept winding upward, ever upward, and the headlong speed with which they had rushed on made

a short rest absolutely necessary. Charles, however, every now and then, repeated his cry of "Anna, Anna!" He thought that his voice might perhaps reach the girl and induce her to stop or to turn. But, no other response came to his anxious call, than that of the sportive echo which, sharply and clearly, flung back the two syllables, "Anna, Anna!"

When they had rested awhile, and to some extent regained their strength and their wind, the three set off again in pursuit. They had to follow a road which led them along the most eccentric windings up hill and down dale. At one time the path would run sharply round some huge rock, at another it would follow the course of some erratic mountain-stream. Elsewhere again, it ran zigzagging down an almost perpendicular slope; but yet, on the whole, the ground was steadily rising and was evidently leading up to the lofty table-land which is bounded by the cliffs of the Goenoeng Poleng. Very frequently the road would run, for a while, abruptly downhill as it took them into the bottom of some wild ravine; but this, far from giving them rest, only increased the discomfort of travelling. For the sudden change of motion threatened to dislocate their already tired knees and then, every descent was immediately succeeded by a sharp and trying climb which put to tremendous proof the soundness and power of their lungs.

But in spite of fatigue, the three men kept hurrying on. Van Nerekool's impatience would brook no delay. They panted, they caught their breath, they puffed and blew like grampuses; but still they kept on. As they turned every sharp bend in the road, they felt sure that they must catch sight of the fugitives; for certainly they could not have got very far ahead of them. Escape was utterly impossible; for there existed but the one path up the mountain, and that went twisting and turning through a country so wild and so rugged that no human being could leave the footpath either to the right or left. So they anxiously peered round all about them whenever they gained some spot which gave a command of the country; but look as they would, not a glimpse could they catch of either Anna or Dalima.

At length the three men gained the top of the plateau, and they felt that, for a few moments, they must again sit down and rest. But yet, they could find no trace of the young girls they were so eagerly following. The road now no longer rose, it merely twisted in and out between huge boulders of rock, between hill tops, and around thick clumps of dwarf shrubs, and thus it offered no extensive view.

"They cannot possibly be far ahead of us!" panted van Nerekool. "Let us get on, let us get on! We must be close upon them!"

But in this the young man was mistaken—as a matter of fact the girls had really gained very considerably on their pursuers.

In the first place, they had a considerable start when the chase began. They had been able to run nimbly along a path which was quite familiar to them, which they had indeed been accustomed to climb almost daily. Their knowledge of the country enabled them to make many a short cut with which the Europeans were unacquainted; and thus they had managed to avoid many a long bend and twist in the road. And lastly, extreme terror seemed to have lent Anna wings, and poor Dalima had been compelled, as best she might, to toil after her young mistress. When they reached the plateau, Anna kept on leading the way and hurrying in a southerly direction. She knew that the sea could not be far away; for the thunder of the breakers, which, for some time, had been audible in the distance as a hoarse murmur, now grew more distinct every moment; and as they sped on they could feel the very soil quivering under the terrific pounding of the mighty ocean on the perpendicular wall of rock.

"Where are you running to, Nana?" panted Dalima.

"Let us hurry on!" cried Anna impatiently, as she ran, casting behind her many an anxious look.

"But, where are we going to, Nana?"

"Why yonder!" cried Anna hurriedly as she pointed to the south.

"But that way leads to the sea!" cried Dalima.

"Just so," replied Anna, "and that is where I want to go."

"What are we going to do there, Nana?" asked Dalima anxiously.

"I know a hiding place where no one will find us or even go to look for us."

"What? There, Nana?"

"Yes, yes, do come along—try to make another effort—it cannot be far away!"

"A hiding place?" repeated Dalima. "But, Nana, there is nothing over there but the bare rock."

"Aye; but in those rocks there are holes!" cried Anna much excited.

"The Goewahs!" exclaimed the baboe in utter dismay.

Anna answered a few words which, however, Dalima did not catch. Darting on like a hind, the Resident's daughter had outstripped her companion. Dalima was naturally very strong and inured to fatigue and exertion; but her condition was beginning to tell upon her. The burden she had to bear and the rapid motion, had utterly exhausted her, and she felt her strength fast ebbing away. The blood began to flush up to her head, her temples throbbed, her eyes seemed covered as with a reddish film; and an insupportable feeling of weariness and listlessness pervaded her entire frame. Still she struggled on game to the last. Her breathing was getting thick and wheezy—she was, in fact, on the point of fainting altogether. But this little Javanese girl was endowed with a tough frame and an indomitable will; and, though almost exhausted, yet she struggled after her companion as mechanically she kept muttering to herself:

"Forward! Forward!" Oh no! she could not, she would not leave her Nana in the hour of need.

This painful progress went on for some time. At length, after they had turned round an immense boulder which seemed to form a barrier to the path, Anna stood still.

Before her, in all its grandeur, lay stretched out the Indian Ocean; and from the height of about twelve hundred feet she could obtain a magnificent view of it.

She cast one anxious look behind her. The position she now occupied commanded an extensive view of the path along which she had toiled up; but not a soul could she see stirring on it. Might the pursuit have been given up? It seemed improbable, yet it was possible. Might they have missed the road and gone off on some wrong track? Anna fancied, that every now and then, she had heard her name called out behind her; but that again might very well be the result of her over-wrought imagination. Again and again she eagerly scanned the horizon in all directions. But no, nothing, nothing was to be seen.

Somewhat quieted she then turned her attention to poor Dalima, who, panting and moaning, had, by this time, come up to her, and then, almost senseless, had sunk to the ground.

Anna sat down by her companion. She tried to cheer her up; she rubbed and kneaded, in native fashion, the muscles of her neck and shoulders, she patted her hands; in fact, she neglected nothing that the most anxious solicitude could suggest until she saw that Dalima had somewhat recovered from her prostration.

As soon as she had succeeded in relieving her companion, Anna again gave an anxious nervous look behind her, but still she could perceive nothing. Then she walked forward resolutely to the edge of the slope which ran before her down to the sea.

"Yes," said she, half aloud, "the ladder is still hanging there. I have heard a good many tales about the Goewah Temon. If it must be so—I shall fly there for refuge!"

Then, once again, looking to the north, she continued: "But I hope I may not have to undertake that fearful journey—I can see nothing," she said with a sigh, "if Charles were really on my track, he must have appeared long before this on the table-land!"

Therewith she turned her face full to the ocean. Though she was disguised in Javanese dress, yet she was, and always would remain, a child of the West; that is to say, her eyes were open to the glories which Nature was there offering to her gaze.

Before her lay the Indian Ocean. On the far horizon it seemed to melt away into the sky; but yet in that distance a line clearly defined the apparent contact of sea and heaven. Closer inland the water wore a dark blue tint, forming a beautiful contrast with the light azure-blue of the heavens. This contrast was rendered more striking still by the tremendous rollers which came up from the South. Those mighty billows looked like long lines of liquid hills, which seemed to detach themselves from the horizon and come rolling in majestically upon the shore of Java.

These immense waves were smooth as polished glass; for not the faintest breath of wind so much as ruffled their surface, and thus rising and falling calmly and mysteriously, they looked like the undulations of some vast sheet of dark blue cloth. They came rolling in quietly and regularly like the ranks of an advancing army; and, on the side of the wide ocean, they sloped but very gently, as though the deep were too languid to exert itself. But, on the land-side, the slope was steep and the columns of water came on black as an advancing wall. At first, and seen at a distance, the tops of these advancing waves were smooth and round; but as the watery mass neared the land and the wave rose higher and higher, so gradually did it narrow and grow sharper at the top; and the billows seemed to succeed one another at shorter intervals. At length, the tops lost their rounded form altogether—they became a mere ridge which began to fret angrily—then they sharpened to a mere line which, fast and furious, seemed eager to outstrip the wave itself. A moment after, this line of water began to bend forward, forward, forward still, until it formed an arc of immeasurable length. Presently that graceful curve seemed to fly to pieces and shake itself into a ragged crest of silver foam; and, at last, the entire mass came toppling down, covering the sea with thick milk-white froth which came sparkling, and thundering, and dashing itself into blinding spray against the wall of trachyte which seemed to say to the mighty element: "Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther."

Anna did not venture to look down into the sheer depth below her, where the waters were boiling in their fury. She feared that a look into that giddy depth might shake her resolution should she actually be compelled to attempt the descent. She gazed out far away to the horizon. There, almost due west, she could clearly see Noesa Kembangan, that beautiful hilly island which, with its luxurious vegetation, seemed to float as a basket of flowers on the watery expanse. She could clearly discern its lighthouse standing on the Tjemering hill—standing out clear against the light blue sky like a pillar of cloud arising from among the foliage. Here and there the bosom of the ocean was dotted with a white sail like some big sea-bird disporting itself upon the glassy surface. And, as if chance had wished to accentuate that resemblance, just then a flight of snow-white cranes came hovering by, forming a dull white stripe on the azure sky. They flew harshly screeching towards the West, on their way, probably, to the fishy lagoons and morasses which there abound. The swift and easy flight of these birds suggested a sad thought to poor Anna: "Oh, that I had wings," she sighed, "that I also could fly, fly far away and be at rest!"

And then her fancy carried her back to the past. The image of Charles van Nerekool rose up vividly before her. As in a dream she pictured to herself how happy she might have been by her lover's side. She could hear that "*invitation à la valse*" and to its delightful melody she seemed once again to float about with his arm around her. She could hear his first murmured confession of love. She again passed through those delicious moments after the dance in the quiet garden of the Residence. Before her, arose the Pandan grove in which Charles had gently detained her to reiterate his declaration of love. At the rhythmical swell and thunder of the ocean, which was giving forth its mighty melody at her feet, she fancied she could hear again the soft duet played by the cornet and the piccolo:

> "Un jour l'âme ravie,
> Je vous vis si jolie,
> Que je vous crus sortie
> Du céleste séjour.
> Etait-ce donc un ange, une femme,
> Qui venait d'embraser mon âme?
> Las! Je ne sais encore . . . . Mais depuis ce beau jour
> Je sais que j'aime d'un pur amour."

She felt once again her lover's arm around her waist and his voice she could hear whispering to her softly, and saying:

"Anna, my darling, I love you, I love you more dearly than words can express, more dearly than my mother, than my sister, more dearly than my own life!"

Oh! those precious words! Ah! that heavenly moment! And then, dreaming on, she heard:

"Tell me, Anna, tell me. Do you love me, dearest? I know I have already had your answer; but repeat that word once again, now that we are here alone—now that we are here, far from the noise of the world—repeat that little word now, as we are standing under the eye of God himself!"

She had treasured up those words. They were engraven as it were, in her heart. Then she could feel the kiss—the first kiss of love which set the seal to her murmured reply. She could feel—

But, as at Santjoemeh, so here again, she was destined to be roughly startled out of her reverie. She fancied she could hear the voice of her mother. She would have cur— No, no, not that, she had not the heart to curse anyone; but she cast one reproachful look upwards to heaven, as she felt how so much bliss had been turned to misery and woe. The pleasant dream had vanished.

"A blighted life!" she sighed, "a blighted life!"

A sudden shriek shook her up out of her day-dream.

"Nana!" cried Dalima, "the gentlemen are coming."

And indeed, to Anna's horror, she then saw in the bend of the path Murowski, van Nerekool, and Grenits, coming along with all speed. Without taking one instant for deliberation she dashed down the slope which led to the awful precipice before her.

"Nana! Nana!" cried Dalima beside herself with terror, "what are you about?"

The poor Javanese girl did her best to follow her companion; but, before she could fairly stagger to her feet, Anna was far ahead of her, and, fagged and exhausted as Dalima was, she could not pursue her quickly enough. As she neared the edge of the slope which ended in a perpendicular wall of rock running straight down to the sea, she could see Anna lay hold of the upper steps of the rottang-ladder which led down to the deep below.

"Nana! Nana!" she cried in heartrending accents.

She rushed on—she saw her young mistress place one foot carefully upon the ladder—she saw her body gradually disappearing.

"Nana! Nana!"

Now, only Anna's head was visible. That also disappeared, and she could only see one hand clutching at the topmost rung.

"Nana! Nana!"

The hand let go its hold before Dalima could bend forward to grasp it. It was gone—gone!

Then the Javanese girl flung herself flat upon the ground and peered over the edge of the fearful precipice which yawned beneath her. What she saw there was enough to freeze the young blood in her veins. But she had no time to waste in gazing with horror at what was going on below.

Once again she shrieked, "Nana! Nana!"

Just then she felt some one grasp her arm. She looked up, and van Nerekool was standing beside her.

"You here, Dalima!" cried he, not understanding in the least what was going on. "Where is nonna Anna?"

"Allah! tobat toean!" cried Dalima, still lying on the ground, but pointing with horror down into the deep.

"There? There?" exclaimed Charles beside himself with terror, while he flung himself down on the ground and gazed into that frightful precipice.

Fortunately Grenits and Murowski were close behind their friend. He was in a fearfully dangerous position, as he, regardless of all caution, hung over the wall of rock, and it was well for him that his friends firmly grasped his legs.

"Charles! Charles!" they cried.

"Anna! Anna!" cried van Nerekool in despair—for yonder, far beneath him, he could see the girl cautiously climbing down the long ladder which, made of rottang ropes, was dangling and swaying about under the burden it had to carry.

The foot of this crazy ladder dipped into the sea, and was being swayed about by the breakers as they came rolling in shore.

When a wave thundered up it swept the end of the ladder into the cave as the water rushed into the opening; and then, when it receded spouting out of the mouth with the force of a cataract, the foot of the ladder was whirled away again in the opposite direction. This violent motion repeatedly dashed Anna up against the face of the rock as she was dangling there far above the surface of the sea, and every now and then a roller would dash its blinding spray upward as if greedy for its prey.

At that fearful sight van Nerekool shuddered.

"Anna! Anna!" he called again and again in heartrending tones.

His voice seemed to reach her above the din of the water. Timidly she glanced upwards. When she saw that face which showed clearly against the blue sky, and which she recognised in an instant, she uttered a faint shriek and hurried down faster than before.

Van Nerekool sprang to his feet.

"I must go down!" cried he nervously.

And before his friends could do anything to prevent him, he had grasped the top of the ladder, had stretched out one foot over the abyss, had placed it into one of the rungs, and had begun his perilous descent.

It was now Murowski's turn, and Grenits's turn, to fling themselves down flat on the ground.

Certainly it was a horrifying sight to behold those two human beings dangling above that roaring sea on one frail ladder of rope. The two men could not speak, they could hardly breathe, so intense was the excitement and tension of that moment. There they lay gazing down, utterly powerless to stretch out even a finger to save their friend.

As soon as Anna perceived that van Nerekool was following her she obeyed the impulse which had driven her to flight, and tried to descend more rapidly than before. But, another thought came flashing upon her. She had heard the dessa-people at Ajo talking a great deal about the Goewah Temon. She knew, from them, that, at low water, the entrance to the cave might be reached; and that then the cave itself might be entered. She knew also that this entrance could only be gained by swimming, because the bottom of the cavity was quite six feet below the lowest water mark. She did not mind that, for she could swim like a duck; but—! but—! all this was only practicable at ebb tide, at dead low water, and when the sea was calm and there were no breakers rolling in.

But now—! now the waves were dashing with terrific violence against that trachyte wall—It seemed as if every successive wave reached higher—Yet she descended—further down—still down—"

"Anna! Anna!" cried Charles above her head.

At length she reached the top of the vaulted cavity. She knew that, at low water, the opening was about fifty feet high, but how narrow did it look just then! Indeed the greater part of it was covered by the sea. She fancied she might just manage to reach the courses of rottang-rope which led from the mouth of the hole to its interior to assist the gatherers of swallows' nests in their perilous work.

She was putting out her hand to feel for one of those cables.

But, as she did so, a wave of enormous strength came rolling up and broke at her feet with a crash like thunder, and fearfully shook the foot of the ladder which hung loosely floating about at the entrance of the cave.

Terrified out of her senses, the young girl lost her presence of mind altogether. She let go her grip, and fell backward into the seething water.

"A blighted life!" was her last cry as she fell.

Van Nerekool had looked down, as he felt the huge wave approaching—he saw his beloved Anna fall backward—he saw her floating in that boiling surf—he saw her tossed and rolled about like a log in that thick mass of white foam. For the merest fraction of a second he could see her glorious mass of jet-black hair waving on the gleaming surface—and then—all was sucked up into the cave and disappeared from his view.

To him, she was now lost for ever! There he was, helplessly dangling above the precipice which had just swallowed up his dearest treasure on earth, and—for an instant he knew not what to do. The next moment came the lull and the huge billow was hurrying back to sea. Then the young man saw the immense volume of water spouting out of the cave with magnificent energy; but—in that clear blue column, as it rushed forth, his eye could catch nothing which looked like a human body; and it flashed upon him that, dead or alive, Anna must have been left behind in the cave. She might have clutched hold of some projecting rock, her clothing might have caught somewhere. Quick as lightning he darted down the ladder. The top of that cave he must get to before the next wave came tumbling in. With feverish eagerness he clutched the rungs—he made no use of his feet—he rather slid down and—he just contrived to grasp one of the rottang cables, and get his feet clear of the ladder when, another wave gave it a violent shake which might have compelled him to let go his grip and might have swallowed him up as it had done Anna.

Van Nerekool was now, comparatively speaking, safe. Two sturdy cables of considerable thickness were stretched out parallel to one another all along the inner wall of the grot. At intervals these were fastened by gemoetoe cords to the salient parts of the rock. On the lower of these cables Charles could plant his feet, while with his hands he grasped the upper one. Beneath him the sea was roaring and over his head and all around him fluttered the sea-swallows uttering their shrill cries and darting in and out of the mouth of the cave through the blinding spray.

Grenits and Murowski from the top of the cliff had eagerly watched all that had passed. They had been horrified at seeing Anna fall and van Nerekool disappear in the cavity.

"Well!" cried one of them, "what to do now?"

"We can do no good up here," said the other.

Dalima begged them to tell her what they had seen, and as soon as she had heard it she cried:

"We must be off at once to the loerah of the dessa Ajo. He has a boat with which, I know, he occasionally visits the Goewahs."

And that brave little Javanese girl, forgetting all about herself and her painful condition, shook off her fatigue and was already far down the pathway before the Europeans had found time to follow her. And, when they came to the foot of the mountain they found the boat of which Dalima had spoken.

The loerah made a very wry face when he heard the project of the two Europeans. To try and get to the Goewah Temon in such weather! It could not be done. He pointed to the mouth of the Kali Djeties. There the mountain water flowing down was struggling with the rising tide and made the breakers fly up in clouds of spray. At the sight, which was indeed an awful one, the two friends all but despaired. Must they then give up all hope? Must they leave van Nerekool to perish without an effort?

"I will give you fifty guilders, loerah!" cried Grenits, "if you bring me up to the cave!"

The Javanese chief scratched the back of his head in sore perplexity.

"And I," cried Murowski, "I give another fifty!"

The loerah began to waver. He exchanged a few anxious words with a couple of men who stood by his side. These seemed not so scrupulous. With a gesture of assent they at once sprang into the boat into which the Europeans took their seats also.

"Look here," cried Grenits almost cheerfully, "each of you fellows shall have five-and-twenty guilders if we succeed!"

"I will give the same to each of you," said Murowski, "and now give way with all your might."

The loerah had taken his place in the afterpart of the crazy boat and he held the steering paddle. Even Dalima and our two friends Grenits and Murowski had armed themselves with a paddle and prepared to help the rowers to the best of their ability. Under the impulse of these six blades the boat shot rapidly ahead.

At first, as long as the boat was in the bay all went well. The loerah steered straight for the middle of the entrance of the Moeara; for he was anxious to avoid the tossing and the dangerous back-draught of the water along the coast, and thus, helped on by the stream of the river, the little boat sped on like an arrow released from the bowstring. But, as they gradually got into the estuary, the force of the ocean began to make itself felt. The current began to decrease more and more until at length it was no longer perceptible. Now small waves began to beat up against the keel, and these presently increased in size and power as they coursed along the sides and gave a kind of pounding or stamping motion to the little boat. Still the canoe travelled on—it got into the midst of the foam caused by the breakers and into the eddies formed by the retreating waves. The little cockle-shell seemed dancing on foam. The loerah, who knew that the critical moment was approaching, was sitting in the stern his lips tightly compressed. He wore an anxious and determined look as he clutched his steering-paddle which, at one time, the wave strove, as it were, to pluck from his grasp, and at another the violent swaying of the boat threatened to wrench from him.

He was keeping a most anxious look-out, it was a question of life or death. Could he venture to go on? When the billow broke, the hollow tree-stem was at a considerable distance from it. But now the question was: could they hope to get over the distance between that mountain of water and the next one before it also would break? No, he thought they could not. The risk was too great to run. Still he kept looking out and, in the far distance, the next mass of water came steadily rolling up. It was coming on like a towering hill. To the men sitting in that frail canoe it looked like a mountain. The little boat was still hurrying on and, though very unsteadily, yet the five paddles kept way on her. The great wave every instant came nearer and nearer—at length it seemed to rear—it rose as it were perpendicularly over that nutshell, which seemed mad enough to brave its fury. Already it began to form its silvery white crest and appeared like a solid wall of polished blue glittering under the sun's beams.

"Easy all," shouted the loerah, who had the while been carefully watching the approaching wave.

At the word the paddles ceased to move, and the boat lost all the way she had on her. But just then it seemed as if, without any impulse at all, the little boat was hurrying to meet the huge billow. It looked as if she must inevitably be swallowed up in that mighty curl of water which was about to form.

"Back her, back her!" shouted the loerah as he plied his paddle vigorously.

Fortunately the frail boat immediately obeyed the reversed action of the paddles, and was drawing back at the moment when the mass of water was beginning to topple over. One moment, indeed it was only for the fraction of a second, the inmates of the canoe caught a glimpse of that vast cave of water, that enormous cylinder of light-blue transparent crystal. But still the wave continued to curl, to describe something like three quarters of a complete arc, and then—it came crashing down at a few paces from where the boat lay, it came crashing down with a sound like thunder, and covered the entire surface of the sea with thick, milk-white foam. "Give way, give way!" now fairly roared the loerah and, impelled by those sturdy arms, the boat shot ahead over the whirling eddies, through the dense foam flakes, while the terrible force of water went dashing up the mouth of the Moeara.

Now came the time for exertion; for she must be well away out of that place before the back-sweep of the retreating wave could overtake her, she must be fairly out to sea before another such breaker could come upon her.

The men plied their paddles furiously, and the small craft shot ahead with lightning speed. A little while, one supreme effort, and then she began to rise.

"Give way! Give way!" again shouted the loerah and, redoubling his own efforts, he encouraged his men to row vigorously.

Thus impelled under the frantic strokes of the rowers, the boat was driven up the slope of the wave, which had not yet become dangerously steep. For an instant the little shell hung balancing on that watery edge, her ends hovering in the air, only the centre of her keel resting on the water, and then, she quietly slid down the opposite pent and all were out of danger.

The loerah thereupon steered a southerly course; but yet it took a considerable time to reach the mouth of the Goewah. When they got near the cave the ebb tide had fairly set in, and the helmsman had to exercise only ordinary prudence to pilot the boat into the cavity.

Meanwhile what had been going on inside? When van Nerekool had gained a footing on one of the cables, he had at once cautiously begun to advance, groping his way in the twilight which reigned in the cave.

It struck him that the subterranean vault, into which he was now venturing, was of considerable extent, and ran in far under the base of the mountains; but at the same time, he noticed that the bottom of the cave gradually rose, so that the sea, excepting in a few holes here and there, only penetrated about two hundred feet into the interior.

But, within that space, the water had full sway, and was raging furiously.

At first, he could hardly see anything: but presently his eyes became more accustomed to the gloom, and he began, moreover, to feel more confidence in the feat of tight-rope walking he was trying to accomplish. Thus he advanced deeper and deeper still into the cavity. At length, close beside a slab of trachyte against which the water was dashing furiously, he thought he could descry something.

Taking advantage of every prominent bit of rock he carefully let himself down, and he was fortunate enough to succeed in reaching the mass of trachyte. He found its surface uneven enough to give firm foothold, and at length he found some natural steps by which he could venture to descend to the water's edge. And when he got there—there was his Anna, quite unconscious! She had, in her drowning agony, clutched at the rugged face of the rock. The lower part of her body lay floating about in the water; but her head was resting on her arm, which encircled one of the out-jutting pieces of stone.

Charles seized her, he grasped her waist and tried to drag her up against the face of the boulder. The tide was rising and he had need to make haste; for every moment it seemed more probable that Anna would be washed away by the back-rushing waves. By dint of putting forth all his strength, Charles at length succeeded in dragging her to the upper surface of the slab, and then he sat down beside her. He took off his coat and spread it out upon the stone to make his Anna as comfortable a resting place as he could. Her head was resting on his lap and, in that position, he allowed her for awhile quietly to rest.

A single glance around had satisfied van Nerekool of the fact that the highest tides had never reached the top of the block of stone, and that therefore they were, as far as the sea was concerned, in a place of safety.

With his handkerchief he gently wiped away the sea-water from her pale countenance, and he took a strange delight in spreading out upon his knees her luxuriant mass of black-hair as if to dry it. He knew also that it would be worse than useless to try and get out of the cave before low water, the violence of the waves was too great to admit of any such hope. But, he thought, that, at dead-low water it might be possible to reach the ladder which was still tossing about in the entrance of the cave. By that time he had no doubt that Anna would have regained consciousness, and he knew she could swim. Then once on the ladder—However! he thought, time will bring counsel! Thus musing he gazed down at the beautiful girl who lay there helpless on his knees, Murowski, he thought, and Grenits would surely do something to come to the rescue.

It was indeed a critical moment in the young man's life. There, stretched out before him, lay the one being who was dearer to him than all the earth, the one being whom he adored with all the power of his soul, the one being who had robbed him of sleep and deprived him of rest, whose dear image was always and everywhere floating before him. The one human being whom he longed for, whom he yearned to call his own, with all the passionate eagerness and all the tenderness of his impulsive nature.

Anna, in her Javanese dress, was covered only by her sarong and kabaja. The slendang, which had served as her head-dress, she had lost in her descent down the ladder. This extremely primitive costume, made of the lightest and most flimsy materials, was now wet through; and there lay the poor girl unconscious on the lap of her lover, who was suffering torments which might fitly have found a place in Dante's Inferno.

The dim twilight and the finely divided spray which hung all around seemed to bathe that virgin form in a kind of mystic ether and imparted to the entire scene something weird and sublime.

Slowly—very slowly—time rolled on—too slowly for poor Charles van Nerekool.

Meanwhile the water no longer rose, and the turn of the tide was beginning to be felt. Every wave which rushed in, roared and boiled and foamed just as did the former one; but yet the water did not reach quite so high, nor did the waves rage so furiously.

But, hours would have to elapse before Charles could venture to make for the opening.

"Oh, if Anna would but awake," sighed van Nerekool, who, not for an instant, had moved his eyes from the beloved object, "oh, that she would awake! In her own presence she would find a much more powerful protector than in me!"

His prayer was heard. Still insensible, Anna mechanically made an attempt to wipe away some drops of water from her brow. Charles tried to assist her in this, he tried to put up his handkerchief; but in doing so he had stooped and his hot feverish breath fell on the face and neck of the girl.

This startled Anna and, at length, she opened her eyes. She turned her head, she looked about inquiringly, not able to make out where she was; presently her eye fell upon Charles.

With a loud scream she made an effort to start up, "You, you here?" she exclaimed, and again she tried to rise and run away.

But van Nerekool gently put his arm round her waist, and drew her to his breast:

"Anna," said he, "dearest Anna, do take care, do be quiet—you will slip down—the sea is still much too high."

"You here!" she cried half-dazed, "I shall—I will—" And once again she attempted to wrench herself out of his arms.

"Anna," said he soothingly, "do be quiet, do be prudent! the rock is wet and slippery. Be careful, you are yet in great danger."

His voice was so low and he spoke so tenderly, that the young girl gave up her wild attempt. But when her eye fell upon her own person and she discovered in what a state she was lying in the young man's arms, she once again tried to shake herself free. The sea-water had washed the stain off her face, and the bright scarlet blush was now plainly visible as she cast down her eyes in dire distress.

"Leave me, Charles," she stammered in confusion, "do leave me!"

But he only clasped her tighter to his heart, and covered her face with burning kisses.

"Anna, I love you—Anna, I have found you again!" he exclaimed, passionately, "and never, never again shall I leave you."

"But, Charles, do have pity on me," pleaded the poor girl in faltering accents, as she again strove to free herself from his embrace, "yours I can, I may—never be."

"Anna," cried he huskily, as he pressed her closer and closer still to his breast.

She probably misunderstood his action—at all events she continued very, very sadly: "No, Charles, your wife I can never be—and—oh, you love me too well, do you not?—to have any other thoughts."

The poor girl said these words in a voice so unutterably sad that van Nerekool felt at once that he had unwittingly wounded her modesty. At once he released her, though he still kept his arm round her waist.

"But, Anna," said he, "why should you not become my wife?"

"No, never!" replied she resolutely. "Not then, and not now. I have given you my reason very fully. Now let me go."

"But, Anna," he persisted, "since that time circumstances have entirely changed."

"What circumstances?" she asked, looking up anxiously in the young man's face.

"Why, now your father and mother are dead—"

"What? father and mother dead?" exclaimed the poor girl, before the word had fairly left his lips.

He nodded assent. Anna covered her face with both hands and sobbed convulsively.

It was a very strange scene down there in that gloomy cave. Those two young people—one of them in his shirt sleeves—the other in her wet sarong and kabaja, indeed, one might say, scarcely dressed at all—sitting there side by side on a bare slab of rock. She with her face buried in her hands and sobbing as if her heart would break, he gazing down eagerly and lovingly upon her, striving, as it were, to fathom the thoughts which were rising in that maiden breast, and upon which he felt that his happiness depended.

"But, can it be true?" said she at last amidst the sobs which convulsively shook her entire frame, "can it be true? Oh, Charles, you could not be cruel enough to invent such a story. Charles, Charles, what am I to believe?"

"Anna, dearest Anna, what do you think of me? do you really think me capable of thus trifling with your most sacred feelings. Indeed, you are misjudging me, Anna."

She kept on weeping bitterly and was inconsolable. He gently drew her to him, trying to comfort her in her distress. And now she offered no resistance; but she rather nestled up to his breast. Now that she was an orphan, and that she knew she was alone in the world, she sought for protection with the man whom she had always faithfully loved.

"Both dead," she kept repeating again and again, "what did they die of? Oh, tell me how it happened! You have come straight from Santjoemeh, and you must know all about it."

"No, my love, on the contrary I know just nothing at all. When I left Santjoemeh both your parents were in excellent health and spirits. On the very morning when I set out with Grenits—"

"With Grenits?" asked Anna, "Theodoor Grenits? Is he with you here?"

"Yes, my love, he is—but, as I was saying, when we started, on that very morning Mr. and Mrs. van Gulpendam set out for Soeka maniesan."

"Soeka maniesan?" inquired Anna, "what place may that be?"

"It is a sugar factory situated in the extreme east of the Residence of Santjoemeh. It was not until after we had reached Gombong that we received tidings of the sad event. A telegram."

And then, in as few words as he could, he told the poor girl all he knew. It was not much and amounted simply to the fact that both the Resident and his wife had been murdered by a band of robbers. The letter in which van Rheijn promised to give further details was, no doubt, at that moment waiting for them at Gombong. When he had told Anna all he knew, van Nerekool paused for a few moments. He wished to give the poor girl time to recover, in some measure, from the terrible blow that had so suddenly fallen upon her. She was literally overwhelmed with sorrow and sat leaning up against him weeping bitterly. Her nature had but little in common with that of her parents. She herself had brought about the parting—of her own free will she had left her parents' roof, with the settled determination of never returning to it again. But now, death had stepped in—death had made that parting irrevocable—death had made a reunion impossible—and now, all her affections at once flew back to the beings to whom she owed her life. Now she clean forgot all the dreary past, she clean forgot all that was bad, only to remember, with the greater tenderness, whatever had been kind and good. Yes, she was, indeed and in truth, deeply affected, and, had it been in her power, she would have laid down her life to undo the past.

While they were sitting thus the ebb tide had fairly set in, and the water was beginning rapidly to draw back. Every successive wave, as it rushed into the cave, was less violent and retreated also more quietly. That went on until the fury of the water had entirely abated, and presently they were merely ripples that entered the Goewah Temon.

"Now, my dearest Anna," said van Nerekool, anxious to break the silence and to lead her thoughts into another channel, "now it is time to move, or else we might be surprised by another tide."

She raised her head and looked about her. When she saw that the sea was calm she also felt that no time was to be lost. She wiped away her tears.

"Yes," said she, "we must get out of this place; but, can you swim? For, you see, the water which is standing in the mouth of the cave yonder is much too deep to wade through. Yes? Then that is all right—there is no fear—we shall soon get to the ladder."

With these words she prepared to leave the stone on which they had found a safe resting-place, and was getting ready to slip into the water; but Charles kept her back, and gently pressing her to him, he said:

"After the terrible news you have just now heard from me it may not be right for me to speak of love. But, Anna, I have lately felt so utterly wretched, and, in these last few moments I have been so unspeakably happy! Promise me now, in this solemn place and in this solemn hour, that you will not again try to escape from me."

She looked up at him. There were tears in her eyes, there was an expression of heart-felt sorrow in her countenance, and she could not utter a single word.

"All obstacles," continued he, softly whispering in her ear, "are now removed. You are now your own mistress. Tell me, dearest Anna, may I hope?"

She turned away her head and laid her hand on his mouth. There was, in the midst of her sorrow, something playful in the action, and Charles caught that hand and covered it with kisses.

"Thanks!" he said, "thanks! Oh I know well that just now you can give me no other answer. Thanks again and again. But Anna, now we must take to the water, we must be off."

Both were on the point of entering the sea and beginning their perilous journey, when voices were heard outside the cave. Charles and Anna looked at one another in surprise; but in another moment they saw Dalima, Grenits, and Murowski, accompanied by a couple of Javanese, who—the reader knows in what manner—appeared in a canoe at the mouth of the cave.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed poor Anna, as she cast a look at her clothing. "And I in this wet dress!"

She blushed scarlet as she saw the sarong and kabaja clinging to her limbs. She felt, moreover, that Charles was gazing at her; and this only augmented her confusion. Charles, however, took up the coat on which she had been seated and offered it to her as a covering.

Meanwhile the little boat had been coming up and Grenits and Murowski, and especially Dalima, were beside themselves with joy when they found that the friends, whom they had given up for lost, were alive and well. The loerah of the dessa Ajo had flung a couple of sarongs into his boat before starting, to wrap up the bodies in, he had said, so certain was he that the pair must have perished. But, these two garments now came in very handy. Anna was able to wrap herself well in them, and in this Dalima was eager to help her. Then she stepped into the boat. In a few minutes they had left the Goewah Temon and, two hours later, Anna, Dalima, van

Nerekool, Grenits and Murowski were safely and comfortably seated together in the little house on the slope of the Goenoeng Poleng.

At that meeting, plans for the future were very speedily determined upon, and the sun had scarcely reached the zenith, before Anna and Dalima were seated, each in a litter, and were on their way to Karang Anjer. The gentlemen formed the escort to the two litters; and a very formidable escort they looked, armed, as they were, with their fowling pieces.

At the house of the Steenvlaks Anna met with the most cordial reception. There she determined to remain until—Well, yes! until the days of her mourning were passed.

After all this had been properly settled the young men returned to Gombong. Theodoor and Charles at once went to the captain who was in command there, to take leave of him and to thank him for having granted their friend Murowski leave to accompany them.

"Well, gentlemen," cried the bluff but kind-hearted soldier as he caught sight of them, "have you had any luck?"

"Oh yes," cried Grenits, "we have had splendid success!"

"That is right, I am glad to hear it. And did you get any good specimens?"

"Glorious specimens, captain!" exclaimed Murowski, roguishly, "splendid specimens! Why, amongst others we have had the luck to catch a magnificent, a unique butterfly—a *puella formosa*."

"Very good, I wish you luck with the little beast, but for heaven's sake don't bother me with your Latin."

Even van Nerekool could not refrain from laughing as he thought of the little butterfly they had captured.

Fourteen months later Anna van Gulpendam and Charles van Nerekool became man and wife. The wedding took place very simply and without the slightest display, at the house of Assistant Resident Steenvlak. August van Beneden and Theodoor Grenits gave away the bride, and Edward van Rheijn and the Polish doctor Murowski were witnesses for the bridegroom.

At the conclusion of the marriage ceremony, who should suddenly turn up but William Verstork. After the death of Resident van Gulpendam, he had been at once recalled to Santjoemeh where his merits were well known and where he was highly esteemed. No one expected to see him at the wedding; for a telegram had brought the news that the steamer

in which he travelled from Batavia had run ashore and had stuck fast somewhere about Tegal. But, when he found that getting the ship off the shallows would be a long business, Verstork had left her and gone ashore, and then had posted all the way to Karang Anjer. He was determined, at any cost, to be present at his friend's wedding. But, on his journey, he had been unavoidably delayed, and thus came too late to take part in the actual ceremony, though in ample time to join, on that auspicious day, in the warm congratulations which were showered on the young couple. Yes, if ever there were hearty congratulations and sincere good wishes they were indeed those which the young people received from the friends who, in the absence of nearer relations on either side, were then gathered around them.

After the wedding, Mr. and Mrs. van Nerekool started for Tjilatjap intending there to take the boat to Batavia where van Nerekool had obtained a judicial appointment. The others returned to their own spheres of work. Murowski remained at Gombong and the others went to Santjoemeh and resumed their everyday duties.

But all of them, to a man, were animated with one resolution and had determined that thenceforward it should rule all their actions. And that resolution was, to carry on war—implacable war—war *à outrance* against the horrors of the opium traffic. If they could only succeed in abolishing the fatal system of opium farming—if they could but succeed in preventing that poison from being forced upon the population, then they felt assured that abuse of opium would soon cease to be a curse of the fair island of Java; and that the opium-fiend would soon lose his power.

And now we conclude with the person who gives her name to this book.

We must tell our readers that a few months after baboe Dalima had found those whom she loved so faithfully and so well in the cave of the Karang Bollong mountain range, she became the mother of a dead child. That had been a great blow to her; for, in spite of the foul outrage of which she had been the victim, her warm little heart had eagerly looked forward to the advent of the little stranger. She had so looked forward to love the poor little thing. Oh, how tenderly she would have nursed it, how she would have fondled it and caressed it—as perhaps no other mother had ever done before her. Such were her dreams. She had already prepared its cradle. Not such a thing as we cold Western folk understand by the word; no, no, it was a very simple little basket, woven by her own fingers out of bamboo. But that little crib she had made so cosy, so comfortable; she had furnished it with the softest cushions and wrapped round it the best of her sarongs to keep away the mosquitoes by night and ward off the sun's rays by day. It would be a little nest which she would hang up in the front gallery of the small cottage in which she meant to take up her abode, and, as she softly would rock it to and fro she would play on the gambang and lull her little bird to sleep with her low sweet song.

Now, all that happiness was gone! The fatigue, the exertion which she had undergone, and all the anxieties of the terrible events through which she had passed; the dreadful suspense at the Goewah Temon in which she had so nearly lost her darling Nana, had proved too much for her.

Yes, she had been very very sad; but time heals even the deepest wounds. And then, after all, she was with her Nana and she intended to remain with her to her latest breath. She had travelled with Anna to Batavia, and there she settled down to be the baboe of the little van Nerekools who, she fervently hoped, would bless the union of her friends.

And anyone who knows the faithful affection with which the Javanese do attach themselves to their masters, if the latter will but treat them with anything like fairness and kindness, must feel certain that baboe Dalima will remain faithful to her trust until

THE END.

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